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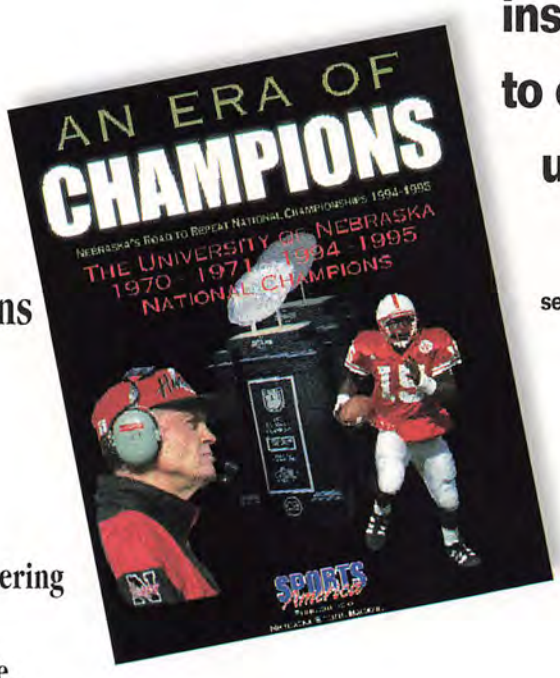

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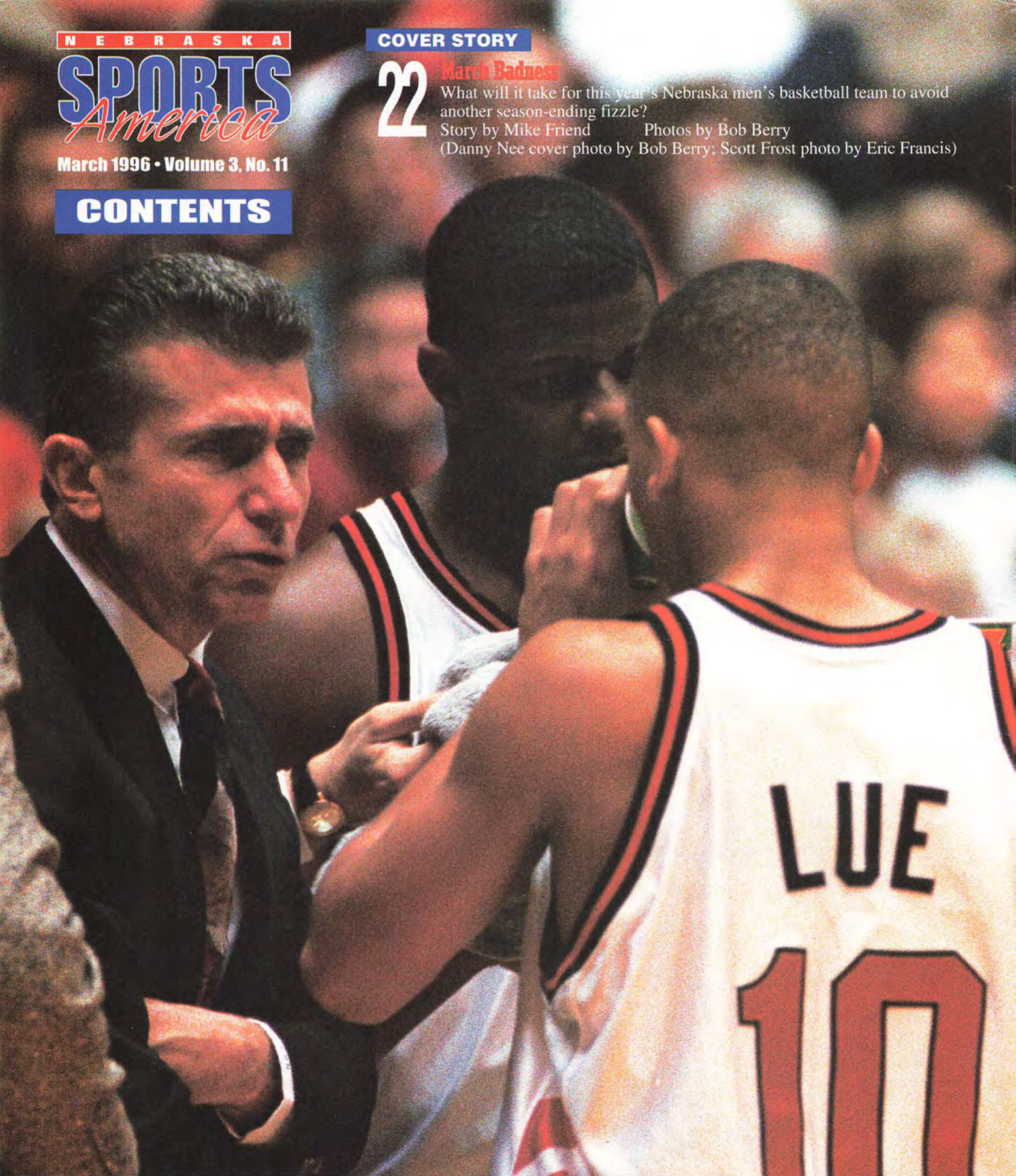
CONTENTS



COVER STORY

22 March Badness
What will it take for this year's Nebraska men's basketball team to avoid another season-ending fizzle?
Story by Mike Friend Photos by Bob Berry
(Danny Nee cover photo by Bob Berry; Scott Frost photo by Eric Francis)

14 One Step Ahead
Speed, size and experience are three qualities that put Stanford University transfer Scott Frost ahead in Nebraska's quarterback contest.
Story by Sean Weide

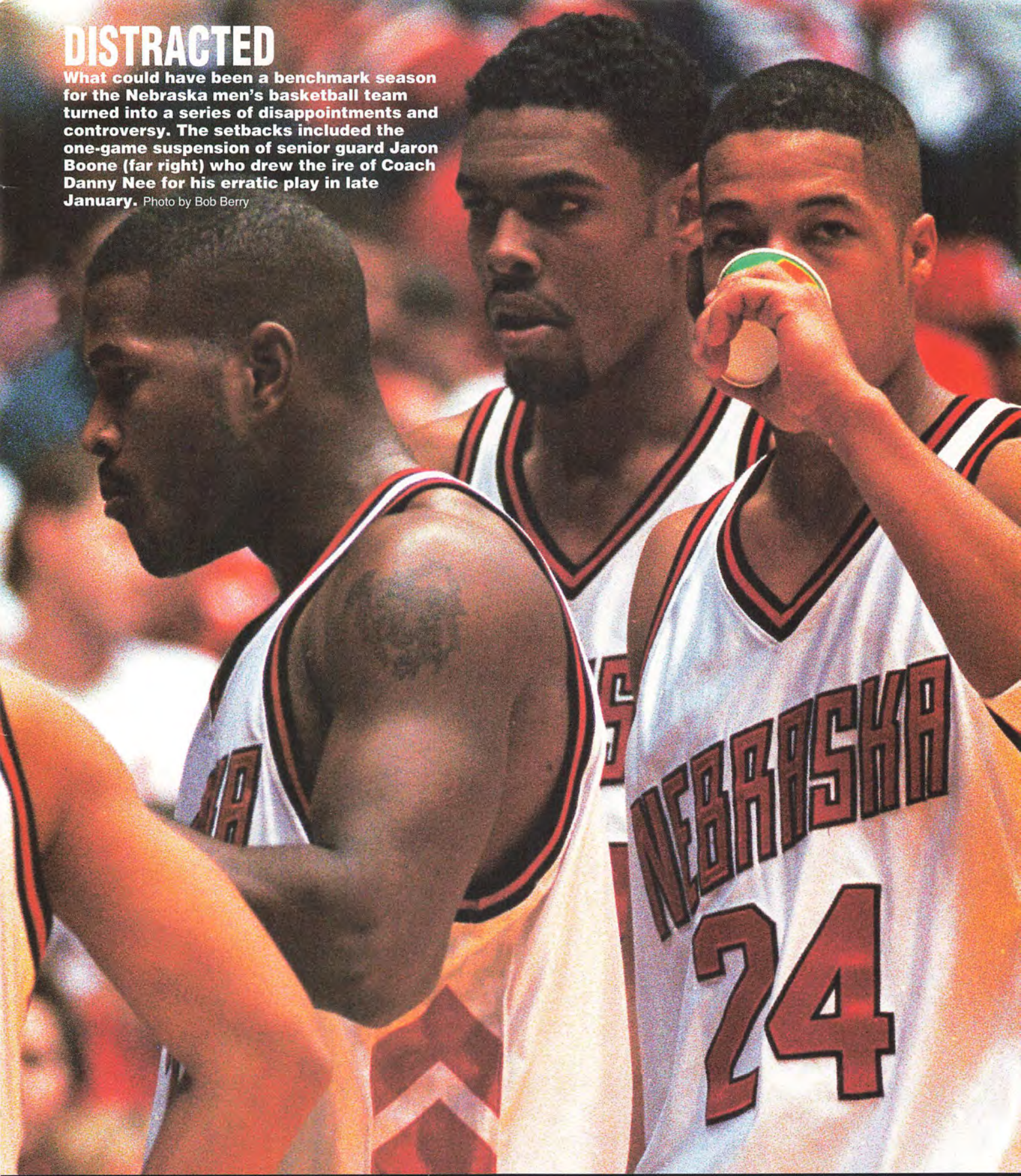
19 On With The Tradition
A capsule look at each player in the 1996 class of Nebraska football recruits and how the Huskers' talent stacks up in the national recruiting race.

34 Changing Face of Hockey
No longer a black-and-blue sport, hockey now relies on finesse and skill. The Omaha Lancers have used this style of play to their advantage.
Story by Lyle Michaels

40 Pinning Down A Title
Following Tolly Thompson's lead, the Husker wrestlers hope for their time on top come Big Eight tournament time.
Story by Brian Hill

DISTRACTED

What could have been a benchmark season for the Nebraska men's basketball team turned into a series of disappointments and controversy. The setbacks included the one-game suspension of senior guard Jaron Boone (far right) who drew the ire of Coach Danny Nee for his erratic play in late January. Photo by Bob Berry



46 **At Home On The Sidelines**
Dave Hoppen had his day in the National Basketball Association. These days he's content to find his place in the business world. Story by Ron Powell

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letters to NSM
6 Inside Nebraska Sports
8 Out of Bounds! by Jim Rose
9 Boom Right Here! by Gary Java
10 Athlete of the Month
12 The Big Red Report
28 Centerfold Poster
30 Between the Lines by John Knicely
38 Nebraska Sports People
50 Great Sports Programs
56 Blue Chips
58 Photo Finish

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"The national magazine featuring local and regional sports."

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Letter from the Editor

After months of planning and much anticipation on the part of our staff, this month we welcome you to the inaugural issue of "Nebraska Sports America." After 15 months as "Nebraska Sports Magazine," we believe the change better reflects the nature of sports coverage we intend to bring you as we expand into other states in the midwest.

For those of you who have been with us since the beginning, we're not forgetting our roots — we're expanding them. Along with the excellent statewide coverage of sports in Nebraska, we'll also be bringing you stories about professional teams such as the Kansas City Chiefs, the Kansas City Royals and extensive coverage of the new Big 12 Conference.

Our name change brings some new departments in addition to our regular features, in part because of the phone calls and letters we've received from you in the last few months.

On page 12, we unveil a new department: "The Big Red Report." Year-round, this is your exclusive source of information about the Nebraska football team. In this issue, we examine which players contributed the most statistically to last year's team and which players will return this year.

Next month and periodically throughout the year, we will report on youth and high school athletes and teams in "The Prep Report" and we'll update you on happenings at state colleges and universities in "The State College Report." We remain committed to keeping you informed of athletic news and achievements throughout the state.

We also will continue a department which was unveiled in our December issue, "Great Sports Programs." This month's feature examines the success story of the tiny town of Mullen in consistently producing some of the top wrestling talent in the state.

That's not the end of the changes, either. Next month, we'll debut a new look for our departments, designed by our art director, Suzan Matherne. We hope you'll find these changes to be both useful and attractive.

Keep those letters, faxes and e-mail messages coming. We're always open to your comments, story ideas and suggestions. Welcome to the dawning of Sports America!

Sean Weide

Correction

In the January issue, it was incorrectly reported that Nebraska Wesleyan University athletes Lynette Baker, Sandy Shaneyfelt and Justin Rice were named GTE Academic All-Americans. Deb Mashek, Betinna Baker, Lynette Baker and Shaneyfelt were named NAIA All-American Scholar-Athletes in women's soccer while Chad Wemhoff, Joe Mick and Rice were voted GTE Academic All-Americans in football.

Please send comments to Nebraska Sports America, 4115 South 133rd Street, Omaha, NE 68137-1105, or call (402) 333-8544 or (800) 333-8544 outside the Omaha area. Visit our site on the World Wide Web at http://www.nesports.com. Comments also can be sent via e-mail to Nebraska Sports America at nesports@synergy.net or by facsimile to (402) 333-6808.

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Letters to the Editor

"Beating up on Florida in the Fiesta Bowl made up for all those heart-breaking losses to Florida State, Oklahoma and Miami."

James Zimmerman
Fort Collins, Colo.

Phillips Poster Was Irresponsible

I support many Nebraska athletic activities both professionally and privately, but I cannot support a magazine that chooses to glorify running back Lawrence Phillips by making him the "centerfold."

There are many Nebraska athletes who do not attempt to destroy a row of mailboxes with their ex-girlfriend's head! Surely you could have chosen one of them. Hey, maybe you could even feature an athlete who is a woman.

We live in a society that desperately needs to come to grips with its treatment of women. Choosing Lawrence Phillips over a true star athlete, like (Nebraska volleyball player) Allison Weston, has made me realize just how out of touch your magazine is with responsible journalism.

Melissa Chapman
Omaha, Neb.

Glory Years Are Back

I just finished browsing the net and found your site. I spent the better years of my life growing up in Nebraska and had the pleasure of watching the Huskers do it the first time with Rodgers, Tagge, and Glover (among others) in the early 1970s. It has been a *looonngg* time since those glory years and now they are back.

Because of my long-distance connections to Husker-land, I was pleased to learn of your magazine. I look forward to getting my first subscription — just in time to follow those three-peat Huskers!

Thanks for the time . . . Virginians for Nebraska!

Nick D. Swanstrom
Herndon, Va.
EPACOP@aol.com

Item Missing On Wish List

I enjoyed Gary Java's "Wish List for 1996" but I wish he would have added two more items to his slate: "A brain for Lee Corso" and "Positive stories about the Huskers in Sports Illustrated."

Will ESPN and SI ever quit bashing Nebraska and Tom Osborne?

Michelle Steinbeck
Eugene, Ore.

So Glad To Find You

I am so VERY glad to have found the Internet location of your publication. I was browsing through a freebie NSM obtained at the Millard Dairy Queen when I spotted your Internet address.

Many thanks!

James Browning
Omaha, Neb.

Frost Is Next Great QB

Tommie Frazier was one of those "special" players, but now that the Frazier era has come to an end many people are asking, "Who could ever replace him?" I always answer very confidently when asked this: "Scott Frost will be the next great Husker quarterback."

I, for one, am more than anxious to see "Frosty The Showman" put on a show the next two seasons.

Could we go four-in-a-row?

Bob Hausmann
Neligh, Neb.

We agree. See our story about Frost on page 14.
– Editor

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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Letters to Nebraska Sports America may be mailed to: NSA Letters, 4115 South 133rd Street, Omaha, NE 68137-1105.

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World Wide Web
Nebraska Sports America's site on the World Wide Web (http://www.nesports.com) offers current and past articles from the magazine, photos, high school football and basketball ratings and Husker basketball and football news.

Authentic Nebraska Athletic Department Products

Big Red Boulevard

Located beneath the South Stadium, this walkway is the path which leads the Huskers from the locker room to Memorial Stadium. We invite you to have a name engraved in one of the boulevard's bricks. With your help we can continue the proud tradition of Nebraska football.

Two sizes of bricks are available. A 4" x 8" brick holds two rows of 16 characters and the price is $100. An 8" x 8" brick holds three rows of 16 characters and the price is $250. This purchase is a tax deductible donation to the University of Nebraska Athletic Program.

Big Red Autographed Football/ Volleyball

Authentic autographed balls contain signatures of the 1995 national championship volleyball team ($50) and the 1995 national championship football team ($100). Both balls are pre-printed with autographs of every team member and contain the official University championship team logo.

1995 Team Photos

A color team picture, with a printed heading stating the year and the record of each team, is also available. Pictures were taken prior to the start of the season in full uniform. Cost of both the football team photo and volleyball team photo is $10 each.

Stickers and Pins

Car window stickers and stickers for notebooks and non-weathered materials are available for each championship team. The logo commemorating each championship season is also available as a collar/hat pin. Approximate size of both stickers is 5" x 3 1/2", while the pins are approximately 1" x 1". Stickers are $1 each, pins are $5.

HuskerVision Videos

Videos highlighting the Nebraska volleyball and football national championship seasons, as well as the bowl trip are again available as produced by HuskerVision. This is the only video that gets you into the locker room for pre and postgame speeches. Follow the Huskers through their championship seasons. Last year's season highlight tape and national championship videos for football are also available. All videos cost $20 each.

National Championship Posters

National Championship posters were produced commemorating both the football and volleyball championship seasons. The official championship poster produced by the Husker Athletic Department, is the only one featuring game action photos of the Husker stars. Last year's championship poster and a Tommie Frazier poster, complete with a presigned autograph, are also available.

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1994 Championship Poster	$1		
1995 Championship Poster	$5		
Volleyball			
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Volleyball Logo Lapel Pin	$5		
Volleyball Sticker	$1		
Car Window Volleyball Sticker	$1		
1995 Volleyball Season Highlights Video *"One Goal ... One Focus ... One Champion"*	$20		
1995 Championship Poster	$5		

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South Sioux City Sets Record in 98-Point Win

The South Sioux City girls basketball team established a new state record for points scored in a game during a 126-28 win over Council Bluffs Thomas Jefferson Feb. 1.

The 126 points bettered the 115 the Cardinals scored earlier in the season against Omaha Gross.

Senior Trish Martin scored 27 points while Nebraska recruit Charlie Rodgers added 25 points.

Thomas Jefferson	8	5	9	6	—	28
South Sioux City	36	43	23	24	—	126

Kelly Lindsey Earns Spot on National Team

Millard North senior Kelly Lindsey became the first athlete from Nebraska to be selected to a national team when she was named to the U.S. women's under-20 soccer team.

The national team consists of approximately 50 players who will compete in March for an opportunity to try out for the U.S. Olympic team.

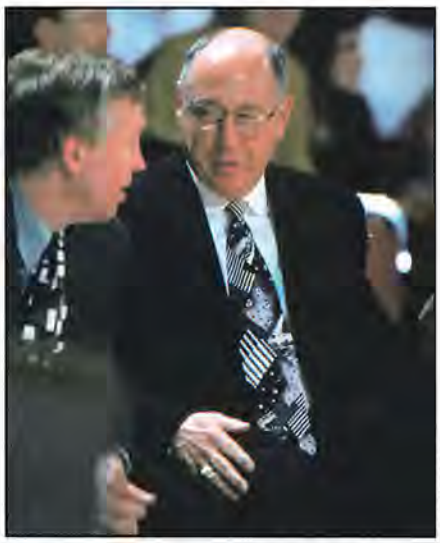
Lindsey is a two-time all-state soccer player who also has captured the all-class gold medal championship in cross country the past three years.

Mike Evans Honored As NAIA Coach of the Year

Bellevue University baseball Coach Mike Evans recently was named the 1995 Rawlings/NAIA Baseball National Coach of the Year at the American Baseball Coaches Association's national convention.

The Bruins won the 1995 NAIA World Series in dramatic fashion, rebounding from a first-round loss to win five straight games and become only the third team in the 39-year history of the tournament to capture a national title in that fashion.

Bellevue is 298-126-1 under Evans in seven seasons and 197-83-1 between 1990 and 1994.



Eric Francis

Omaha Racers Coach Mike Thibault became the seventh Continental Basketball Association coach to win 200 games.

Thibault Earns 200th Career Coaching Win

Omaha Racers Coach Mike Thibault picked up his 200th career Continental Basketball Association victory with a 101-100 win over the Quad City Thunder Jan. 21.

Thibault is 200-155 in seven seasons with the Racers. His teams have qualified for the playoffs every year and won the CBA Championship in 1993.

Racers guard Darryl Johnson won the Long Distance Shootout Jan. 16 at the 50th annual CBA All-Star game in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Johnson defeated Fort Wayne's Carl Thomas 21-18 in a shootout. Racer guards Rod Mason and Phil Handy also participated in the event.

Cambridge Girls' Win Streak Ends at 81

Gothenburg handed Cambridge a 68-57 loss Jan. 11, ending the Trojans' state girls basketball record 81-game win streak.

Cambridge — three-time defending state champions — hadn't lost since a 58-57 setback to Pleasanton in the semifinals of the Class C-2 state tournament in 1992.

Cambridge senior Nicole Kubik, a Nebraska recruit, scored 24 of her 33 points in the second half in the losing effort.

Gothenburg's Michelle Sitorius scored 20 points and had 14 rebounds, while Keri Schlake added 13 points.

Doane College Women Achieve No. 1 Rating

For the first time in its history, the Doane College women's basketball team achieved a No. 1 ranking in the NAIA Division II Top 25 poll in late January.

The Tigers, who won 19 of 23 games at one point, defeated another Nebraska school — No. 12 Midland Lutheran — to move from a tie for third into the top spot.

Football Coach Leaves Nebraska Wesleyan

Nebraska Wesleyan football coach Steve Stanard resigned to become defensive coordinator at the University of South Dakota.

Stanard was Wesleyan's defensive coordinator for three years before being taking over the head coaching position in January 1994. The Plainsmen were 6-14 during his two years at the helm.

'Lady Magic' Elected to Basketball Hall of Fame

Nancy Lieberman-Cline, the only woman to play basketball in a men's professional league, has been selected to enter the sport's Hall of Fame.

Lieberman-Cline is the owner of Omaha-based Events Marketing, a promoter of several local sporting events.

Internet 'Husker List' Keeps Fans Informed

In its fifth year, the Husker List has become one of the most popular places on the Internet for Nebraska sports fans to share their comments with other Husker faithful. There is no cost to subscribe to the list. All that is needed is an internet connection and an e-mail address.

More than 600 users subscribe to the Husker List, which averages between 15 and 30 messages a day, depending upon the time of year. Naturally, football season attracts the most traffic. On the day after the Fiesta Bowl, more than 100 messages were posted to the list.

Mike Nolan, who oversees and manages the list, is a 46-year-old, Lincoln-based computer consultant. The list originally grew out of Nolan e-mailing to a group of friends who were interested in receiving statistics from Nebraska football games.

Because the majority of Husker List subscribers live outside the state of Nebraska, Nolan periodically posts news about University of Nebraska sports — from football and volleyball, to wrestling and swimming — for the convenience of subscribers under the heading "Husker Notes." (Nolan's father-in-law, Cliff Hillegass, is the founder of Cliffs Notes.)

How to Join the Husker List

To subscribe or unsubscribe to the Husker list, send an e-mail message to the address below with the action to be taken in the Subject: header (ie, "subscribe" or "unsubscribe").

If your e-mail system does not give you the ability to do subject headers, try putting the word "subscribe" as the only thing on the first line of the body of your message. If you spell it wrong, your request probably will be ignored.

The e-mail address for automatic processing of requests is:

huskers-request@tssi.com ■

A Sampling from the 'Husker List'

From: Michael Nolan <nolan@tssi.com>
Subject: Kent Pavelka
Date: Fri, 12 Jan 1996 12:44:23 -0600 (CST)

I'm not sure Lyle Bremser was EVER all that accurate, just a whole lot of fun to listen to when he got wound up. In his latter years he sounded more and more like someone doing a parody of Lyle Bremser, and he RELIED on Kent Pavelka to keep him on track. When I was sitting in the student section, it was interesting to put the field glasses on the KFAB booth and watch the hand signals and such between them.

I've said this before, but Tim Moreland, who replaced Dick Perry on KFOR, was far and away the best play-by-play caller for both football and basketball that I've ever heard, and having grown up listening to Chicago radio stations, I've heard some of the best. Tim was exciting, informative, accurate, and you could close your eyes and really picture things as they were happening.

Although I'd much rather listen to Kent than to any of the network folks, I think Kent's 'problem' is he tries to do too much. He tries to give the flavor of the game, like Lyle did, but he also tries to mention every little thing that happens on the field. This leads to too much talking and not enough analysis of WHY the game is progressing like it is. Maybe that's what the color and sideline folks are for, but sometimes it seems like they can't get a word in edgewise. (And Gary S. sometimes doesn't seem to know much about football strategy, either.)

From: David Weeks <ddweeks@netserv.unmc.edu>
Subject: Re: Kent Pavelka
Date: Fri, 12 Jan 1996 13:18:17 -0600 (CST)

I too, think KP has improved, but he still embarrasses me at times. He is, in a way, the Nebraska ambassador, so when he gets the down wrong or distorts the names of his favorite players, it seems to me, paint Nebraska in a backwoodsy unsophisticated manner which I believe is inaccurate. I do think he works harder at his job than any other broadcaster and is/was the most staunch defender of TO and all the hyperbole he was forced to endure this year. What I used to really hate was that when we were losing he tended to whine. Fortunately, that hasn't happened for a while. I'd like to keep KP and fix a few of his idiosyncrasies.

Dave

From: Brett Eby <brett19@access.accesscomm.net>
Subject: Re: Kent Pavelka
Date: Fri, 12 Jan 1996 13:42:38 -0600

In my opinion, I would much rather have every tiny detail described and draw my own conclusions of why things are happening. I really appreciate Kent's calling far more than Lyle's or any network fool, or even the 'analysis' of another in the booth. I can 'see' the game and feel the excitement of the game, thanks to a thorough calling by one I consider well-versed in facts and history of NU football. Too often afterward, I remember the 'analysis' of an announcer having been wrong the very next play or in the latter stages of the game . . .

Brent Eby
Houstonians for Nebraska

From: Paul Jacobsen <jake@neon.nlc.state.ne.us>
Subject: Kent Pavelka was: Husker video
Date: Fri, 12 Jan 1996 11:03:58 -0800 (PST)

I have mixed emotions on KP. I think he simply hasn't endeared himself to listeners the way Lyle Bremser did. Lyle in his later years was being somewhat criticized for lacking accuracy. Kent's only habit that annoys me is, his lack of diction on words that end with "r". i.e. Tommie Fraziah, Cory Schlesingah, Huskahs. On kicks, "It's through thah".

Even though this sounds like fairly harsh criticism, I can't think of anyone to replace him.

Out of BOUNDS

BY JIM ROSE

Read Between the Lines

As my friend and henchperson John Baylor bemoans on such a regular basis, we've arrived at such a time in our journey to re-examine our daily behavior. Factoring his own degree of high-faultiness notwithstanding, he makes a good point.

We need to clean up our act. Let's begin to prove again that civilization progresses.

Before we move to Coach Nee's use of profanity in front of the media, we must judge our own antics in the stands. Before you cry out about how "kids can hear that coach over there use those 'F' words," may I remind you that the little ones and impressionable youngsters are apt to hear the same from the other corners of the Devaney Sports Center.

Moreover, before we renounce the action of the officials in the Missouri game in January, have we forgotten that they, the zebras, also represent authority.

And if we chide and ridicule them for their actions aren't we sending the wrong impulse about authority all together?

"SportsDay Mid-America with Jim Rose" to the rescue.

We have assembled a PG-13 approach to attending games. Understand, this procedure is not designed to geld ferocity of the Huskers' home court advantage, rather make the whole experience a little more enjoyable for us all. Follow along and feel free to bend the copyright rules by copying off this page at the office and refer to it often the next time you head to a game.

Read on for the traditional approach to be followed by the PG version.

Incident: Missouri Coach Norm Stewart interrupts the game by gesturing the official over to his bench for an exclusive explanation of a three-second call.

Before we move to Coach Nee's use of profanity in front of the media, we must judge our own antics in the stands.

Fan: "Come on you stupid REF! Tell Norm to #$%@#* off!"

PG-13: "Ah sir . . . so how was Norm's Christmas party?"

Incident: Missouri guy throws an elbow, no whistle. Nebraska guy throws an elbow. Whistle.

Fan: "Come on you Moron! What about the other end?"

PG-13: "Sir, at which time can we expect this game and your calls to coincide?"

Incident: Nebraska guy gets pushed from behind. Foul called. Free throws taken.

Fan: "It's about time you #$%@#*!"

PG-13: Hey sir . . . that toupee looks great!"

Incident: Missouri guys takes five steps to the basket and lays it in.

Fan: "You jerk! What about the travel?"

PG-13: "Ah, excuse me sir . . . it was my understanding that nonqualifiers were no longer allowed in the Big 12 Conference."

Incident: Ten minutes to go in the second half. The scoreboard reads: Team Fouls: Nebraska 10, Missouri 2.

Fan: "Read the board, you #$%@#* head! Jesus Christ! You're homering us at home!"

PG-13: "Sir, two teams."

Incident: Game over, Missouri wins in overtime by two. Nebraska shoots 20 fewer free throws, has one ejection, two technicals, and the Huskers are lining up outside the training room, begging for crutches. Missouri coach Norm Stewart high-fives the officials on the way out. He gladly obliges to autograph a T-shirt for one of the zebras' kids with the inscription, "I'm a big fan, Norm."

Fan: "Man, you'd better sleep with one eye open . . . Your ass is mine!"

PG-13: ". . . Your rear end is mine!" ■

Boom RIGHT HERE

BY GARY JAVA

Wake Up and Wager

Now that the world is officially going to hell in a shopping cart, what's wrong with letting the taxpayers of Nebraska decide for themselves whether they want to legalize sports gambling in our sufficiently taxed state?

I mean now that the staid, old-fashioned major leagues look like they're going to (Judas Priest!) play a little less than 10 percent of their games against teams from the other league, don't you think it's time for Nebraskans to get our heads out of the '90s (1890s, that is) and seriously consider legalized sports gambling?

I mean, now that Fox TV and the NHL have gone the nuclear puck route, isn't it about time our "Good Life" state quit staring up the ladder at the Atlantis of modern society — Iowa?

For cryin' out loud, folks, the Indianapolis Colts were one play away from Super Bowl XXX (or is it 30?). Pick a play, any play — Lamont Warren getting tackled by his big toe on third and two with just more than two minutes left — Quentin Coryatt dropping a potential interception on the Steelers' winning touchdown drive — or the "Hail Mary" pass that bounced right out of Aaron Bailey's belly in the Pittsburgh end zone — and the Colts are in the Super Bowl.

Like I said, now that it's apparent our world is permanently twisted, why not just throw in the towel and legalize sports gambling in this state?

How 'bout instead of just chasing Iowa's "red checker" around the board, we jump 'em and open state-licensed gambling casinos with legalized sports gambling?

And, just to keep all the pilgrims in the state from falling off their covered wagons: No gambling allowed on any state teams. OK? Understood?

My buddy "Lefty" said to ask all the pilgrims how many baked good sales it takes to make up all the tax dollars that already have been lost to that triple X state to the east of us.

Lefty said to ask all the pilgrims how many pancake feeds it takes to equal the state's take from a weekend of putting a few bucks on NFL or NBA games. (See, ya' don't even have to allow wagering on any college sports, so as not to jeopardize the College World Series or the CFA).

'Now that it's apparent our world is permanently twisted, why not just throw in the towel and legalize sports gambling in this state?

Lefty told me that "B.S." — before slots — in Iowa, our national championship state took in about $22 million in taxes just from keno outlets in this state. He said that went down to $15 million A.S.S. — "After Stoopid Slots."

That's just from keno.

Let's use our imaginations just a little bit. here (I know there's a lot of mileage left on a lot of them). How many tax dollars might be generated by legalized sports gambling for schools, libraries, roads, parks, trails and maybe even convention centers/sports facilities if we let people who choose to, wager their money on pro sports? If you're playing along, make sure your answer is in units of tens of millions.

What's the big problem with that? No Biblical references allowed — not when we, the last bastions of wholesomeness, already allow gambling — yes, plain ol' raw gambling on horse racing, keno and pickles (don't mention bingo; my Italian Catholic mom would wear out "the beads" if I dragged the sacred game of bingo into this discussion).

The worst excuse — even worse than the Biblical reference thing, while we weep over the lost sport of horse racing — is, "it'll never pass." If that's your excuse, then you're a bigger problem than those who still want to go the bake-sale route to compete with the flourishing gambling industry across the Missouri River.

We (Lefty and I) wholeheartedly applaud State Sen. Eric Will for his imagination and guts in proposing LB 1281, which would allow communities and horse-racing tracks to work with American Indian tribes in setting up gambling casinos — with local voter approval.

Sen. Will also had proposed LB 301, which calls for voters in the state to decide for themselves whether to allow Nebraska adults to wager on football, hoops and other sports.

There is no excuse for any elected official telling constituents (political term) that they aren't smart enough to vote for what they want. There also is no excuse for those who think this is a fair means of deciding this issue to give up, throw their hands in the air and say, "it'll never pass!"

Good luck Sen. Will — if it's not too late already. ■

Athlete of the Month

BY SEAN WEIDE

Winning Is Everything to Vering

More than a few high school wrestlers in Class C and D were happy to see Brad Vering take the mat for the last time at the state wrestling tournament in mid-February.

That's because the senior from Howells became the state's all-time winningest wrestler Feb. 2, surpassing the 138 career victories posted by Bennington's Jason Dethlefs between 1984-87.

In doing so, Vering had to avoid injury and sickness while experiencing the good fortune of never having a scheduled tournament, or triangular or dual meet canceled. He also rarely received a bye that often goes along with being a favorite.

"Yes, in a way, I've been lucky," Vering said. "But there's a lot of kids out there who don't know the difference between pain and soreness and pain and injury. If I separated my shoulder or tore my knee up, I'd sit out. But I don't take a day off just because I don't feel good."

Vering didn't lose another match after his freshman year, when he lost just twice in 38 outings. He brought an 111-2 record into his senior season and had a 33-0 record this year heading into the state tournament. His last loss, which occurred in the second round of the 1993 state tournament, proved to be a rare low in a career of highs.

Like so many other wrestlers who have their dreams of winning a state title come to an end, Vering thought about forfeiting his consolation matches after what would prove to be his final loss.

"That night I was so down because I had my sights on being a four-time state champion," he said. "With only one loss coming into the tournament I felt I had a good chance to win, but I lost that match in the third period because I didn't pace myself. I was too intense early on."

Ed Carlson

Howells' Brad Vering finished his high school career as the all-time winningest wrestler in state history. He will attend the University of Nebraska on a wrestling scholarship this fall.

Vering did return to competition the next day and won the rest of his consolation matches to finish third in Class C at 140 pounds. He won the 171-pound titles in Class D his sophomore and junior years. He is the only wrestler from Howells to win a state wrestling title and the only Nebraskan to ever win a junior national title, capturing the 165-pound Greco Roman division last summer. He placed third in freestyle.

Vering said one of the keys to his success was he approached each match the same way.

"I have no idea what's going through my opponent's mind. I just treat every opponent the same," he said. "I wrestle him the same way I wrestled the guy I beat at nationals last year."

This fall, Vering will follow in the footsteps of his older brother, Russ, who wrestled for the Huskers in the early '90s.

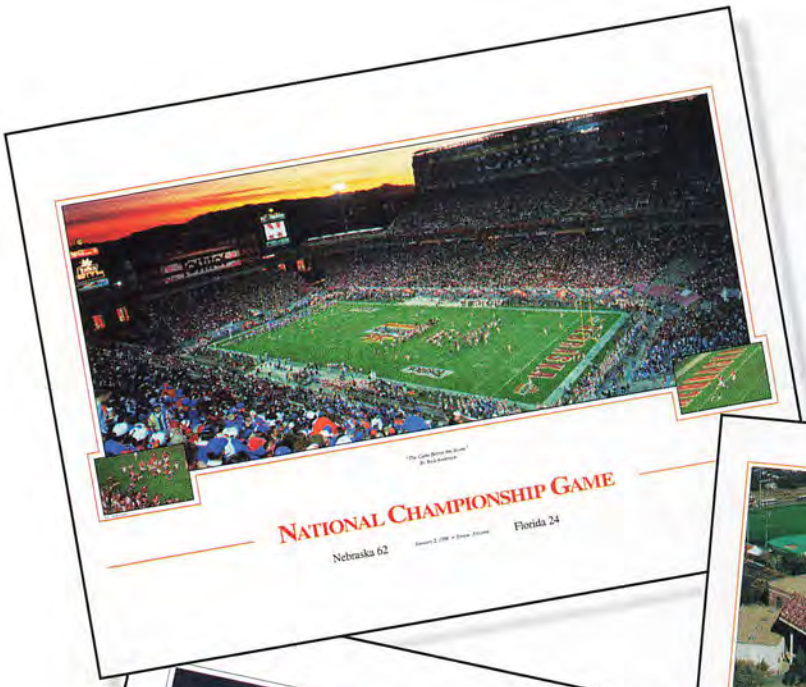
"I don't want to go there to just be another face in the crowd," Vering said. "I'm going down there to be a national champion for (Nebraska Coach) Tim Neumann."

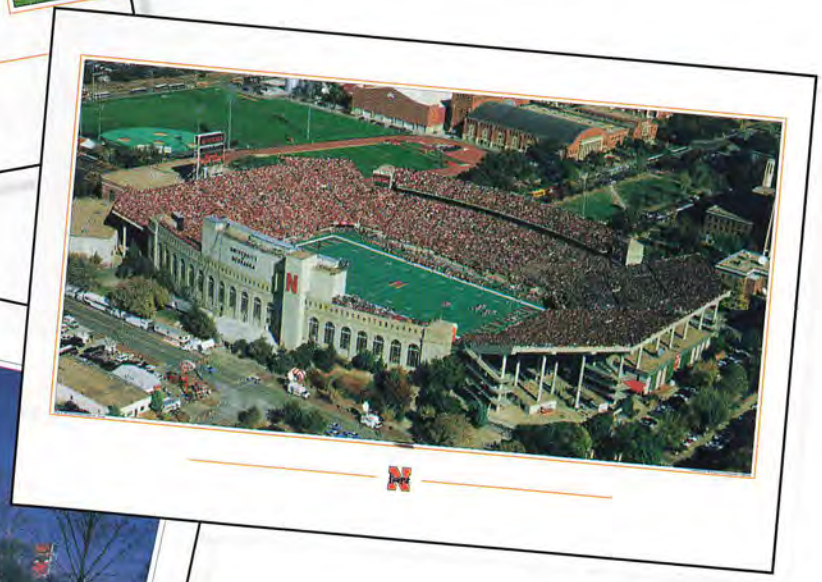
In addition to his success on the wrestling mat, Vering was also a standout on the football field. He led the Bobcats in tackles his last three seasons and was an all-state linebacker as a senior in addition to rushing for more than 1,400 yards as a running back.

"Few kids will ever have the combination of things to succeed like Brad," his high school wrestling coach, Lee Schroeder said. "He's really a combination of all those things. He works tremendously hard. There's already talk of people being the next Brad Vering." ■

Decorative Husker Posters

by Nebraska Photographer Rick Anderson





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KFAB May Lose Grip On Husker Broadcasts

Eric Francis

Current play-by-play announcer Kent Pavelka (standing) may remain in the broadcasting booth even if KFAB is not involved next year but color-man Gary Sadlemyer (seated) has been rumored to be replaced by former Nebraska quarterback Jerry Tagge.

Omaha radio station KFAB, which has held the exclusive rights to broadcast Nebraska football and basketball since 1983, was not the recommended bidder for a new five-year contract for the radio rights to carry Husker football, basketball and volleyball through the year 2002.

Instead, Great Plains Media Inc. of Elkhorn, which does not own a radio station, earned the recommendation of a committee of university officials Feb. 9. Approval of the bid was subject to a vote of the Nebraska Board of Regents at a meeting Feb. 24.

Three bidders submitted proposals in January for the contract.

Great Plains Media offered $1.6 million the first year of the deal with steady increments that added up to $8.6 million over five years.

Henry Broadcasting of San Francisco, which owns KFAB, bid $1 million for the first year of a five-year package worth $7 million.

Host Communications of Dallas and Learfield Sports of Springfield, Mo., offered $1.15 million the first year in a total package of $6.25 million.

KFAB General Manager Chuck Jewell said was was disappointed by the committee's decision not to have KFAB retain the broadcast rights.

"We understand the money is very important and the university chose to go with the most money," Jewell said.

KFAB may compete to become the Omaha affiliate for the broadcasts. In doing so, current football and basketball play-by-play announcer Kent Pavelka could remain a part of the broadcasts, said Great Plains co-owner Paul Aaron. Former Nebraska quarterback Jerry Tagge may also be involved in the broadcasts, Aaron said.

Ironically, Omaha radio station KKAR, which requested the bidding system for the rights KFAB has held since 1983, did not submit a bid. In 1992, KKAR bid approximately $50,000 more than KFAB did at that time, but KFAB retained the contract.

KFAB is estimated to have paid over $900,000 in the final year of the current contract. ■

Nearly Two Dozen Records Set In Winter Conditioning Tests

Twenty school records were bettered in winter pre-condition football testing in early February.

Among the most impressive marks was sophomore Ahman Green's 4.34 clocking in the 40-yard dash. That's the second-fastest 40 in school history behind former I-back Keith Jones, who clocked a 4.33.

Junior quarterback Scott Frost broke the performance index record at the position, bettering Brook Berringer's previous mark.

Another junior, I-back James Sims, shattered the all-time performance index record. The index involves four tests — the 10 and 40-yard dashes, vertical jump and pro agility run. It assigns points based on the player's performance in relationship to his size.

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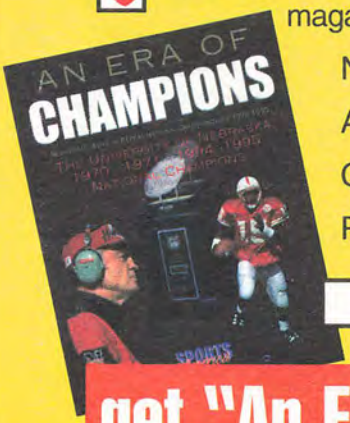

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Annual Spring Game Set For April 20

The two-time defending national champion Huskers will begin spring practice March 26 and conclude drills with the annual Red-White game Saturday, April 20.

Last year, nearly 40,000 fans turned out to see the White team — made up of second- and third-string players — defeat the Red team, 40-34.

Four Players Awarded Scholarships for '96

Two walk-ons and two incoming freshman have earned scholarships for the second semester.

The scholarship recipients are junior cornerback Mike Fullman, junior fullback Brian Schuster, and freshmen Luis Almanzar and Lonnie Fulton.

Almanzar, a 6-foot-4, 220-pound tight end from Jersey City, N.J., and Fulton, a 6-5, 250-pound lineman from Grand Island, did not enroll for first semester classes last fall, while Schuster and Fullman were steady contributors for the Huskers during their second national championship campaign.

Game Against Spartans Moved up to Sept. 7

Nebraska's season opener against Michigan State, originally scheduled for Sept. 14, instead will be played Sept. 7 at Memorial Stadium.

The change was made to accommodate the possibility of a national or regional television broadcast. The regular 1 p.m. starting time may also be changed.

The date of Nebraska's game against Colorado in Lincoln has not yet been decided. Officials of the Big 12 and television networks will decide later if the game will be played Friday, Nov. 29 or Saturday, Nov. 30.

Fiesta Bowl Notebook

Just before leaving the hotel for the game, the Husker football team watched a stirring, specially prepared video. Included on the tape were short speeches from the five team captains and highlight clips from the season. The finale included the Huskers' tunnel walk "Sirius" music and a picture of the Sears national championship trophy with the words "Back to Back" superimposed on the screen.

* * *

In the locker room at Sun Devil Stadium, Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne read a scripture passage to the team. The passage was 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

* * *

Security was heightened around Memorial Stadium during the post-Fiesta Bowl celebrations. Following Nebraska's 1995 Orange Bowl victory, hundreds of frenzied fans broke into the stadium to tear down the goal posts, only to find them packed away for the winter. This time, campus security officers took extra precautions to prevent a similar situation.

However, that didn't stop some frenzied Huskers fans in Kearney and Chadron. Officials at the University of Nebraska-Kearney and Chadron State College discovered damage to the goal posts on their campus football fields the next morning.

"We sure didn't anticipate that happening," said Earl Rademacher, UNK vice chancellor for business and finance. "It doesn't make a lot of sense."

All this was news to Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Byrne, who learned of the incidents during his weekly stint on the statewide Sports Day Mid-America radio call-in show.

"Are you kidding me?" Byrne asked. "Why'd they do that?"

* * *

Post-game headlines from Florida newspapers: "The Fiasco Bowl" and "Tempe of Doom".

1996 Nebraska Football Schedule

Sept. 7	**Michigan State**
Sept. 21	at Arizona State
Sept. 28	**Colorado State**
Oct. 5	at Kansas State
Oct. 12	**Baylor**
Oct. 19	at Texas Tech
Oct. 26	**Kansas**
Nov. 2	at Oklahoma
Nov. 9	**Missouri**
Nov. 16	at Iowa State
Nov. 29/30	**Colorado**

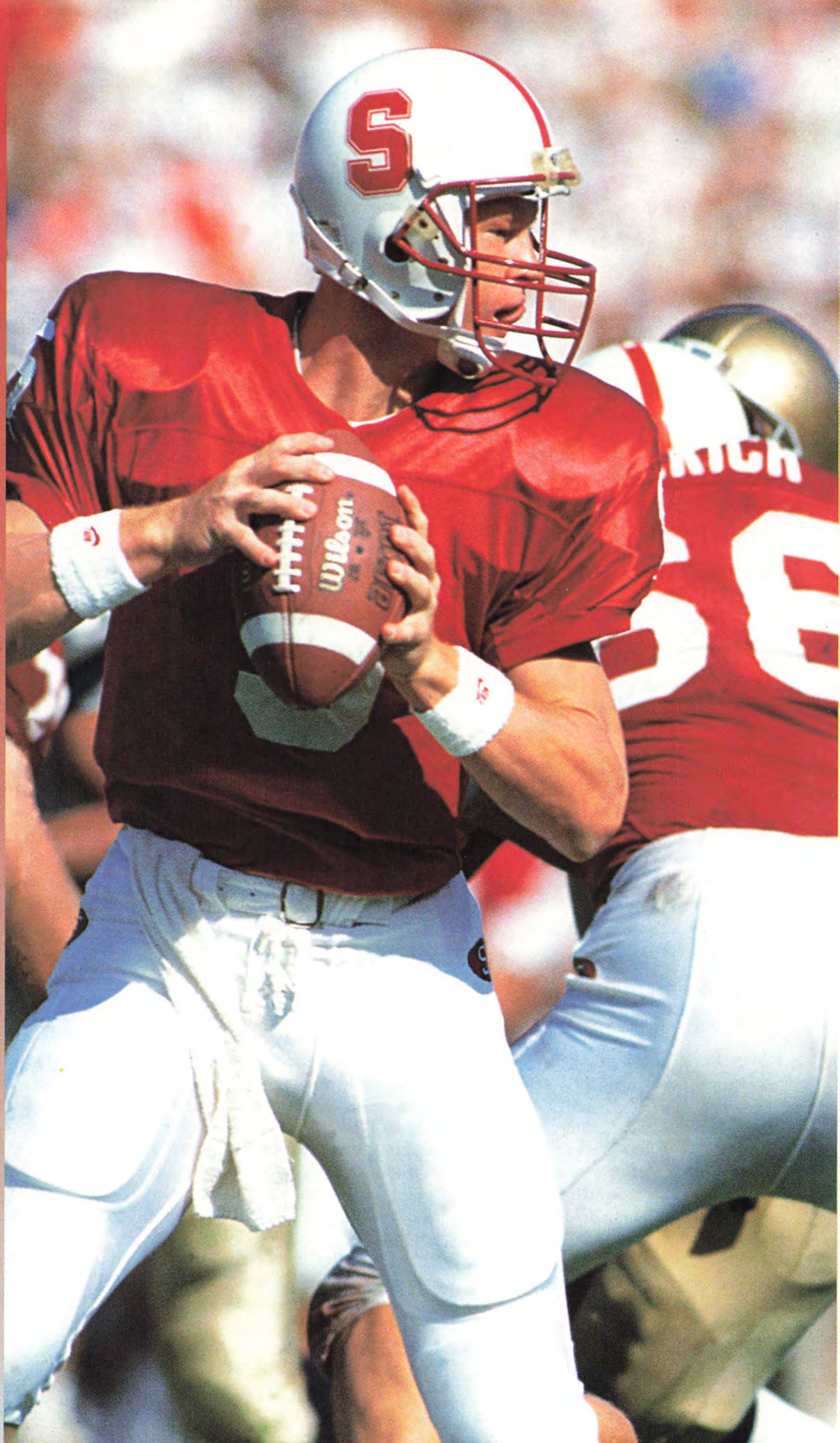
Home games printed in red.

Sugar Bowl Tickets To Go on Sale April 1

Tickets for the Nokia Sugar Bowl, site of this year's national championship game in the Bowl Alliance, will go on sale April 1.

The Sugar Bowl is played in the Louisiana Superdome, which seats 73,468 and features an AstroTurf playing surface.

Tickets for the game can be ordered through TicketMaster by calling (800) 488-5252. Tickets also may be ordered on TicketMaster's Internet site at www.ticketmaster.com/. First priority goes to people who held tickets to last year's game. ■



After two seasons at Stanford University, Scott Frost has returned to Nebraska to play in the state where he became a high school legend.

One Step Ahead, One step closer to RED

Speed, size and experience: Three qualities that put Scott Frost ahead in the race to become Nebraska's next quarterback.

BY SEAN WEIDE

At the press conference announcing his decision to attend Stanford on a brisk day in late January 1993, Scott Frost said: "Hopefully, things will work out at Stanford as a quarterback. If not, I suppose I could eventually switch positions or go to another college, probably Nebraska." As it turned out, he did both. Frost couldn't push Steve Stenstrom out of the starting quarterback job so he started at free safety the first five games of his sophomore year until his teammate went down with an injury. But when Coach Bill Walsh left Stanford for a television commentating job, Frost jumped at the chance to return to his home state and play for the team he cheered for while he was growing up in Wood River, Neb.

Nebraska's heir-apparent to All-American Tommie Frazier, Frost is prepared to end any quarterback controversy before it even begins. The former Parade All-American, who will be a junior eligibility-wise, has only to beat out senior Matt Turman and three others who are all coming off some type of surgery — redshirt sophomore Monte Christo and two freshman redshirts, Frankie London and Jeff Perino.

Barring a major injury, Frost likely will be standing behind center when Nebraska opens defense of its second national title Sept. 7 at Memorial Stadium against Michigan State.

Looking back, it seems as if this was all meant to be for the son of a former Olympic discus thrower.

Frost was groomed by his parents, Larry and Carol, to be a quarterback. His father played halfback and receiver for the Huskers in the late '60s. He began timing his two sons — Scott and older brother Steve — in the 40 from the time they could walk.

His mother, a member of the 1968 U.S. Olympic team and a five-time AAU champion in the discus, helped her husband coach the two when they played junior high and high school football.

Athletics came naturally to Frost. He starred on the football field (where he amassed over 11,000 yards during his career), the basketball court and on the track during his high school career. He averaged 17 points a game his senior year in basketball and won the state shot put title as a junior, throwing 58-2. His academics were also top-notch. He scored a 29 out of a possible 36 on his ACT and carried a 3.8 grade-point average.

The opportunity to play in a pro-style offense under Walsh, who led the San Francisco 49ers to Super Bowl glory in the 1980s, initially was what lured Frost away from his home state.

The decision — which was announced at a packed press conference at Wood River — was certainly a major disappointment to the Nebraska coaching staff and Coach Tom Osborne, who once phoned Frost seven times in one day during the peak of the recruiting season.

Frost was superb in last year's spring game, completing 10 of 17 passes for 158 yards and three touchdowns.

Frost enjoyed highs and lows during his brief career at Stanford.

On his first collegiate play at quarterback during his freshman year, he raced 23 yards on a quarterback bootleg to set up a Cardinal touchdown. But he toiled in the role of backup to Stenstrom all season, carrying the ball just 15 times for 63 yards while completing just two of nine passes.

Eager to receive playing time, Frost agreed to switch positions his sophomore year. At free safety, he started five of the first six games and registered 18 stops, one interception and one tackle for a loss. But when Stenstrom went down with a broken finger against Washington, Frost stepped in.

He completed the 46-28 upset of the 12th-ranked Huskies, then started the last two games of the year, completing 33 of 77 passes for 464 yards with a .429 percent completion rate and two TDs. He also rushed 38 times for 222 yards for a 5.1 average and two scores.

"He was a great athlete with great potential," said Gary Migdol, Stanford's football sports information director. "He was just a tremendous athlete with good size. He was a big, strong kid."

With that in mind, Nebraska Sports America offers three factors that ultimately will decide who is to guide Nebraska on a quest for an unprecedented third consecutive national title.

Health

When it comes to injury, Frost is an "ironman." In four years of high school football and two seasons of college ball, he never has missed a game because of injury.

"About the only thing I can recall is his freshman year of high school when he suffered a slightly deflated lung in one game," his father said. "But he even played some after that before the doctor pulled him out."

The Huskers' other top four quarterbacks — with the exception of Turman — recently have resembled the walking wounded.

Perino underwent minor surgery to

Frost grew up in tiny Wood River, Neb. (population 1,156), located 15 miles west of Grand Island and played high school football for his father. Three of the Huskers' top five quarterbacks — Matt Turman, Monte Christo and Frost — are native Nebraskans.

repair a knee injury suffered during his senior year of high school. His recovery slowed him last fall, but he should be close to full speed in time for spring ball, said Nebraska trainer Jack Nickolite.

London had reconstructive surgery performed on his right (throwing) shoulder in November and currently is listed as questionable for spring practice if he does not receive medical clearance from surgeons during a checkup in late February. Husker quarterbacks coach Turner Gill said London probably will participate in spring drills, but will not be involved in contact scrimmages.

Christo tore ligaments in his knee on the opening day of fall practice last August, but his rehabilitation schedule should allow him to participate in winter conditioning and spring practice.

Experience

Turman is the only quarterback with substantial playing experience. The Wahoo, Neb., native appeared in nine games last year in a back-up role to Frazier and Brook Berringer, and completed 4 of 12 passes for 73 yards with two interceptions and one touchdown.

Not only does Frost have actual collegiate experience at quarterback, he also spent all of last season facing one of the nation's top defenses — in practice situations, of course — running the scout team offense.

And he is adept at running the option. At Wood River, he threw for 6,793 yards and ran for another 4,302 out of a triple option set while having a hand in 152 touchdowns. He led the Eagles to a 33-11 record and three Class C-1 state playoff appearances.

London's high school credentials aren't too shabby, either. The Lake Charles, La., native threw for 1,888 yards and 18 touchdowns and ran for 800 yards and nine TDs his senior year.

But what sets Frost and London apart are the two seasons of Division I experience under Frost's belt.

"He does a good job reading opposing defenses and he has the ability to make things happen when something goes wrong," Gill said. "There's no substitute for actual playing experience."

Size

Frost's stature is that of a prototype Division I — if not pro — quarterback. The sandy blond stands 6-3 and weighs 210 pounds. Perino is 6-2 and 200 pounds while London stands 6-1, but weighs just 175. Christo is 6 feet and 195.

"To survive in our offense as a quarterback, you must be able to see over the offensive line, run and throw equally as well and shed a tackle or two on occasion," Gill said. "Frost has good size and he's a very explosive person."

Not to be forgotten is Turman, who — at 5-11 and 185 pounds — has proven to be no match for opposing teams' blitzing linebackers. Traditionally, Nebraska Coach Tome Osborne has not been comfortable starting a quarterback who can't see over the offensive line.

"You can only work with what you're given and you can only get so big and so strong by working out," Gill said. "Matt has certainly done an awfully lot with the tools he's had to work with." ■

Meet The Men Chasing Frost

Nebraska's other four quarterback contenders behind junior Scott Frost each bring a unique talent to the mix heading into spring practice.

Senior Matt Turman saw limited action in nine games last year, rushing 13 times for 35 yards and completing 4 of 14 passes with two interceptions and one touchdown. He spent most of his first three seasons relieving Tommie Frazier and Brook Berringer.

Matt Turman

The 5-foot-11, 185-pounder performed admirably while subbing for Berringer in two games during the 1994 season. Against Oklahoma State, Berringer suffered a partially-collapsed lung. Entering the game with Nebraska nursing a 9-3 lead, he helped produce three second-half scores and a 32-3 win.

A week later, he became the first walk-on player to start at quarterback since Travis Turner in 1985 when he played nearly the first half of a 17-6 win at Kansas State.

Frankie London

For a time last season, Frankie London was listed as the No. 3 quarterback behind Tommie Frazier and Turman when Berringer missed the Missouri and Kansas State games with a bruised knee.

London, who has 4.41 speed in the 40-yard dash, was one of the top run-pass high school quarterbacks in the nation coming out of LaGrange High School in 1995. He threw for 1,888 yards and 18 touchdowns and ran for 800 yards and nine touchdowns his senior year.

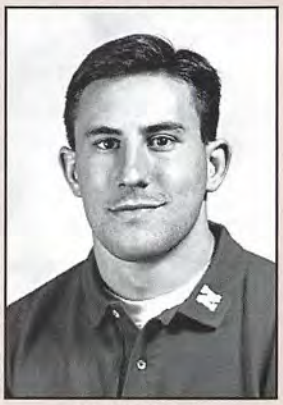
Known more as a thrower than a runner, Jeff Perino played in only four games his senior year after dislocating his knee cap. In those four games, he threw for 890 yards and seven touchdowns and ran for 340 yards and seven scores. He is also an accomplished punter, averaging 39.6 yards his junior year and 47.2 as a senior. In his first season as a quarterback his junior year, he passed for 1,800 yards and rushed for another 463.

Jeff Perino

The 6-2, 205-pound native of Durango, Colo., was also an all-state pitcher and third baseman in high school.

Monte Christo, a redshirt sophomore, has had to fight off injuries since coming to Nebraska in 1994.

The 6-foot, 190-pound Kearney native was set to enter the 1995 season as the Huskers' No. 4 quarterback but he suffered a season-ending knee injury on the opening day of 1995 fall drills and was forced to take a redshirt year. He had already missed all of spring practice after having surgery on his lower back.



Monte Christo

Christo planned to redshirt the 1994 season after tearing a ligament in the thumb on his throwing hand in early August. But just after returning to practice in late October, he was forced into action in the final two minutes of the Huskers' win at Missouri when Turman went out with an apparent separated shoulder. He did not appear in the Huskers' final four games of the season. ■

Huskers Were Not 'Desperate' To Sign A QB

With less than two weeks to go before national letter-of-intent signing day, Nebraska topped off its 1996 recruiting class with a commitment from one of the top high school quarterbacks in Texas.

Two of Nebraska's top recruiting targets at the position — Odell James and Tamaurice Martin — had already committed to other schools when Clint Finley chose the Huskers.

Steve Pederson, director of NU football operations, said contrary to what was written in a Sports Illustrated story in January, the Huskers were not "desperate to sign a quarterback" who could come in and start his freshman year.

"Obviously, we'd like to sign a quarterback in this recruiting class," Pederson said prior to Finley's commitment. "But we're also quite pleased with the talent we have returning."

The loss of James to another Big 12 school — Baylor — was not unexpected. Two weeks after Nebraska's Fiesta Bowl win, the highly touted option quarterback out of MacArthur High School in Houston indicated to Nebraska recruiters that his family would like him to attend a school closer to home.

So even before James announced his decision to attend Baylor, Nebraska already had shifted its focus toward Finley, a 6-foot-1, 195-pounder who compiled a 37-5-2 record as a three-year starter for Cuero High School. Also a standout defensive back, Finley has experience running the option. Despite missing three games with a bruised knee last fall, he passed for 1,800 yards while rushing for 800. ■

One step closer to RED

A Look at the Huskers' Recruiting Class : Quality, Not Quantity

Facing new freshman eligibility requirements, the Nebraska football coaching staff had to narrow its focus in recruiting the 1996 class of future Huskers.

The result was a class of 18 players which was ranked as high as second in the nation by one national recruiting service. With the exception of three or four, the recruits have met eligibility requirements to compete this fall.

"I don't think the quality dropped off here a bit," Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said. "It was just a little harder and took a little longer and was a little more nerve-racking sometimes."

This season, graduating high school students had to have a 2.5 grade-point average and a 17 on the ACT to be full qualifiers. New Big 12 rules, which take effect next season, will limit the amount of partial qualifiers — students who meet one criterion but not the other — conference schools can accept.

Big 12 rules will not allow schools to accept students who meet neither of the criteria. Under Big Eight rules, students needed only a 2.0 GPA and a 17 on the ACT.

"It's too bad because there are a lot of players who would have qualified last year that didn't qualify this year because of the jump," Osborne said.

Of the 18 players who accepted scholarships from Nebraska, 12 are listed on offense and six on defense. Two — cornerback Ralph Brown and running back/defensive back Robert Pollard — are Parade All-Americans and only one — Clint Finley — is listed as a quarterback. Five are from high schools within the state of Nebraska.

The 18 players signed make up one of Nebraska's smallest recruiting classes in a long time. Last year, 26 players signed and 23 of them enrolled in the fall. In 1984, the Huskers signed just 16 players, which is believed to be the smallest in the last 20 years.

On a day when many football fans were on edge while awaiting word on last-minute signees, Osborne even injected a little humor into the press conference when asked to describe this year's bunch.

"I'm a little nervous because this class may be rated somewhere near the top 10, and I prefer to be 30, 35 or 40," Osborne said with tongue firmly lodged in cheek. "You usually do better if you're rated low."

THE CLASS OF 1996

IN-STATE

J.R. Edwards	WR	6-2	180	Lincoln Southeast
John Gibson	WR/DB	6-0	180	Papillion-LaVista
Russ Hochstein	OL/DL	6-4	245	Hartington Cedar Catholic
Loran Kaiser	FB/LB	6-5	245	St. Paul
Willie Miller	FB	6-0	230	Bellevue West

OUT-OF-STATE

Dan Alexander	FB	6-3	230	Wetzville, Mo.
Sacho Becvarovski	OG	6-5	255	John, Ind.
Mike Brown	DB	5-10	195	Scottsdale, Ariz.
Ralph Brown	CB	5-11	175	La Puente, Calif.
DeAngelo Evans	RB	5-9	210	Wichita, Kan.
Justin Ferrell	OL	6-4	285	Mission, Texas
Clint Finley	QB	6-1	195	Cuero, Texas
George Guidry	LB	6-3	230	Lake Charles, La.
Carlos Polk	LB	6-2	225	Rockford, Ill.
Robert Pollard	FB/SS	6-2	205	Orange Park, Fla.
Khari Reynolds	WR/DB	5-11	175	Egg Harbor Township, N.J.
Steve Warren	DL	6-2	290	Springfield, Mo.
David Webber	OL/DL	6-3	270	St. Louis, Mo.

RECRUITING NOTEBOOK:

One recruit facing court date

The Nebraska coaching staff quickly went into damage control mode when it learned on the afternoon of signing day that one of its most prized recruits — running back Robert Pollard — was in trouble with the law.

A news release hastily issued through the sports information office said the charge stemmed from a street fight in January in which Pollard was defending his 14-year-old friend against a 20-year-old.

Pollard was issued a summons to appear in a Clay County court in late February to face a charge of battery, according to Florida state attorney Tim Collins. Pollard could face a sentence of probation to a maximum sentence of one year in county jail. Collins said he expects the case to be resolved by late spring without Pollard having to serve any time in jail.

Nebraska coaches said they were unaware of the charge until after Pollard had signed his binding letter-of-intent with the Huskers.

"If everything checks out as Robert has told us, we feel this will be resolved satisfactorily with time," Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said in the released statement. "We thoroughly investigate every player by talking with everyone who knows him. Everyone has only positive things to say about Robert Pollard."

Oh Brother, Not Florida

With all the success his brother Tommie brought to Nebraska, you'd think his younger brother, Rod Frazier, would naturally want to don the scarlet and cream and follow in his footsteps. Right?

Wrong. The younger Frazier, a star fullback at Manatee High School in Bradenton, Fla., signed a letter-of-intent to play for the Florida Gators.

"Tommie was a guy you built an offense around," said their high school football coach, Joe Kinnan. "Rod is more of a power-type player."

Rod Frazier, a 6-foot, 220-pounder who gained over 800 yards rushing his senior year, was not a recruiting target of the Huskers.

Walk-Ons Eye Remaining Scholarships

Nebraska has given scholarships to two 1995 football recruits — tight end

One step closer to RED

Luis Almanzar and offensive lineman Lonnie Fulton.

That leaves five scholarships to be divided among walk-ons currently on scholarship. But Osborne said he'll wait until after spring drills to announce who the lucky recipients will be this year.

Wahoo's Anderson, Long Planning To Walk On

Running back Josh Anderson and kicker Chace Long of Wahoo High School said they plan to walk-on at Nebraska.

Anderson is a former Nebraska Sports Magazine Athlete of the Month who rushed for 1,729 yards while Long kicked a 54-yard field goal and converted 44 of 46 extra-point attempts.

THE FUTURE CORNHUSKERS:

Dan Alexander

Alexander is NU's first fullback recruit in two years. He considered Illinois, Tennessee, Notre Dame and Iowa but chose Nebraska because of its players' involvement in community relations. His senior year, he rushed for 1,522 yards and scored 18 touchdowns while averaging 8.2 yards a carry as the featured back in a pro-set offense. He also played outside linebacker on defense.

Sacho Becvarovski

A three-year starter on the offensive line, Becvarovski attracted the eye of college recruiters with his 4.9 speed in the 40. St. John Lake Central High also produced NU All-American Jared Tomich. Becvarovski also played tight end his senior year, catching 11 passes for 256 yards and three TDs. He also considered Iowa, Wisconsin, Miami and Texas.

Mike Brown

Brown rushed for 2,036 yards as an I-back but expressed more interest in playing on defense in college. A second-team USA Today All-American, he was in on 70 tackles his senior year while intercepting four passes and breaking up seven others. He was listed as the top defensive back prospect by SuperPrep All-American. He also considered Colorado, Oregon, Arizona State and USC.

Ralph Brown

One of two Parade All-Americans on the Huskers' list of signees, Brown doubled as a defensive back and a tailback, rushing for 2,246 yards on 311 carries during his high school career. Another USA Today second-team All-American, Brown made 52 tackles at cornerback to go along with six interceptions. He was heavily recruited by USC and Colorado.

J.R. Edwards

The most highly-touted of the five in-state recruits, Edwards is also a standout basketball player, averaged nearly 20 points a game this season and 16.5 last year as an all-stater. As an all-state wide receiver, he caught 54 passes for 814 yards and was in on 40 tackles as a defensive back. He also considered Missouri, Iowa State, Colorado State and Wyoming.

DeAngelo Evans

An ankle injury cut short his senior season, but Evans still finished as one of the most prolific high school running backs in history. His 8,473 yards and 206.7 yards-per-game rushing average rank fifth all-time and his 142 touchdowns are the most ever. Evans runs a 4.35-second 40 and has a 40-inch vertical jump. He was heavily recruited by Notre Dame and Penn State.

Justin Ferrell

An all-state lineman, Ferrell expressed interest in attending Nebraska early on but also considered Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and TCU. He is said to be able to bench press a phenomenal 500 pounds and run the 40 in 4.8 seconds.

Clint Finley

Finley is the Huskers' lone quarterback in this year's class. He was 37-5-2 as a starter and completed 62 percent of his passes for 1,064 yards his senior year while also rushing for 800 yards. Finley is also a nationally-ranked hurdler who drew the interest of Alabama, Baylor, Texas and Texas A&M.

John Gibson

With the loss of senior receivers Reggie Baul and Clester Johnson, Gibson could compete for a starting job immediately. The two-time all-stater caught 36 passes for 838 yards as senior and made 102 tackles, six interceptions and four fumble recoveries as a defensive back. He is also a 49-foot triple jumper and the nephew of former Washington Redskins defensive back Mark May. He considered Kansas State, Iowa State, Florida and Pittsburgh before choosing Nebraska.

George Guidry

A second-team USA Today All-American linebacker, Guidry runs a 4.5 second 40 and is also a track and field standout (56-foot shot put, 156-foot discus throw). He had four sacks and 42 tackles last year. He recently underwent arthroscopic knee surgery. He was targeted by Florida, Oklahoma and Michigan.

Russ Hochstein

The first in-state player to commit, Hochstein moved over to right guard as a senior after playing tackle as a junior and center his first two years. A standout basketball player, he is averaging over 14 points and 9 rebounds a game this season.

Loran Kaiser

Kaiser made 40 tackles, 81 assisted stops and recovered four fumbles from his linebacker position his senior year. He is also the starting point guard on St. Paul's basketball team, which was still unbeaten in mid-February. He also received offers from the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Wyoming and the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Willie Miller

Miller was an all-state fullback, rushing for 3,145 yards, including a school-record 1,603 his senior year while scoring 19 touchdowns. He was named the Midlands Region Player of the Year by SuperPrep magazine.

Carlos Polk

Polk made 142 tackles, had 12 sacks, three interceptions and one fumble recovery last year from his middle linebacker spot. He runs the 40 in 4.6 seconds and can squat 500 pounds. He turned down offers from Illinois and Iowa State.

Robert Pollard

The Huskers other Parade All-American, Pollard ran for 980 yards on 120 carries as fullback last year. As a sophomore, he intercepted 10 passes and rushed for 850 yards for Bolles High. He was listed as the second-best safety prospect in the nation by the National Recruiting Advisor. He chose Nebraska over Florida, Auburn and Ohio State.

Khari Reynolds

A National Honor Society student, Reynolds scored 1,180 on his SAT and has a 3.6 GPA. On the football field, he has exceptional speed (4.4 in the 40, 10.5 in the 100). He played quarterback as a junior and switched to receiver as a senior, catching 40 passes for 700 yards. He chose Nebraska over Navy, Rutgers and Temple.

Steve Warren

A first-team all-stater, Warren made 165 tackles last year on the defensive line while rushing for 1,526 yards and 18 touchdowns as a fullback. He has been clocked at 4.9 in the 40 and can bench press more than 400 pounds. He turned down offers from Kansas State, Kansas, Iowa and Alabama.

David Webber

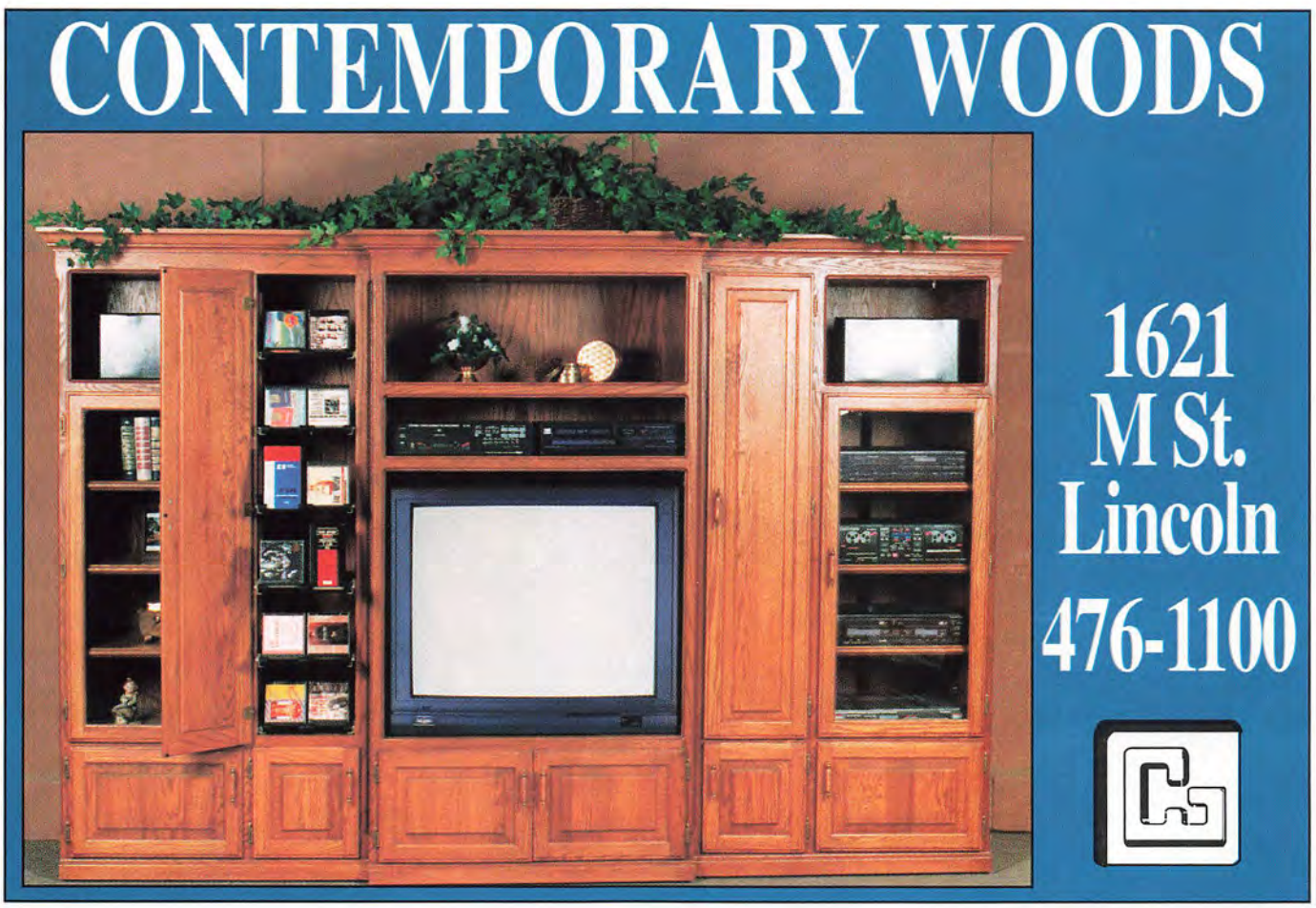
Webber could end up as a guard, center or defensive tackle for the Huskers. A standout heavyweight wrestler, he could face fellow NU recruit Dan Alexander in the Missouri state wrestling tournament. He considered offers from Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas State and Kansas.

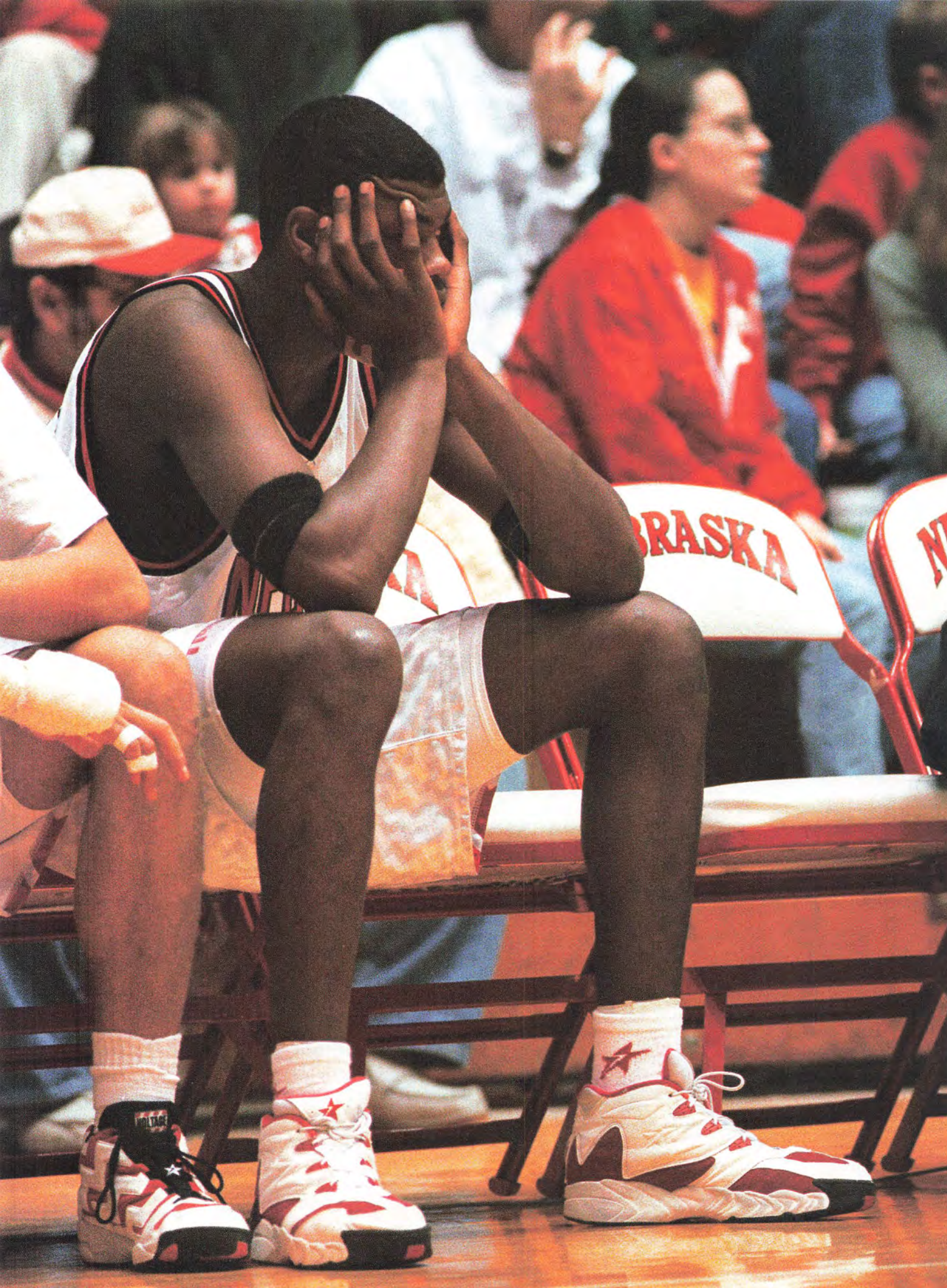
A complete list of all Big 12 schools' recruits will appear in Sports America's special football preview issue in July. ■

HOW THE BIG RED MATCHES UP

How National recruiting analysts ranked the top classes this spring

SUPERPREP MAGAZINE	BLUE CHIPS RECRUITING	PREP FOOTBALL REPORT
1. Penn State	1. Florida State	1. Ohio State
2. Nebraska	2. (tie) Ohio State	2. Florida State
3. Southern Cal	2. (tie) Tennessee	3. LSU
4. Notre Dame	4. (tie) Baylor	4. Penn State
5. Ohio State;	4. (tie) Southern Cal	5. Florida
6. Florida State	6. Penn State	6. Southern Cal
7. Michigan	7. (tie) Michigan	7. Tennessee
8. Tennessee	7. (tie) Colorado	8. Notre Dame
9. Colorado	9. (tie) Nebraska	9. Nebraska
10. LSU	10. (tie) LSU	10. Michigan




BRASKA

MARCH BADNESS

A season full of promise has turned into disappointment and controversy following the one-game suspension of Jaron Boone, public criticism of the coach and a string of losses.

Story By Mike Friend Photos by Bob Berry

The Nebraska football team spent its entire season chasing a repeat of its performance the year before.The Nebraska basketball team is desperately attempting to avoid doing the same thing.

The Huskers' Fiesta Bowl victory and repeat of their 1994 National Championship brought the joy of another title. The basketball team's repeat would ensure little more than sorrow and plenty of disappointment.

Last year, the Huskers didn't even receive an invitation to the NCAA Tournament after faltering down the stretch and finishing the year with an 18-14 record. That late-season collapse set off alarms that Nee hopes he won't be hearing this time around.

If Nebraska's Big Eight tournament championship in 1993-94 was a solid step forward, then last year's Big Eight mark of 4-10 was a frustrating step back.

Following their 65-59 loss to Penn State in the second round of the National Invitational Tournament in Lincoln, the Huskers immediately looked toward the future. They returned all but senior forward Melvin Booker and added a speedy point guard, Tyronn Lue, to keep their up-tempo game going full speed.

But despite their forget-about-the-past approach, the Huskers found themselves mired in a controversy in January and February, and saddled with a five-game losing streak that put a berth in the NCAA Tourney in jeopardy.

The Huskers' Big Eight losses in January and February could be costly. Nebraska traditionally has struggled in the waning weeks leading up to the post-season. In Nee's nine seasons, the Huskers are 5-8 in Big Eight Tournament games and 7-12 in games played during March since the 1991-92 season. The question needing to be asked: Is it too late for Nebraska to turn the tide right now?

According to Nee, leadership may be an ingredient that helps answer that question for Nebraska. Leadership is some-

Although head coach Danny Nee (right) tried not to point any fingers, the Huskers' erractic play in the Big Eight dropped them from a tie for second to next-to-last in the standings.

thing the Huskers sorely missed last year.

Guards Jaron Boone and Erick Strickland, and forward Terrance Badgett have been looked to the last two years for guidance, but the guidance has been sporadic at best.

"We've got to come out every night with the proper mental attitude," Nee said. "Youth plays a part in that too. We've got a freshman point guard who's learning all the time, and we've got a lot of new faces getting playing time and experience. That will help."

After jumping out to an impressive start to the 1994-95 campaign, the Huskers stumbled in a 102-74 loss to Texas in Austin. Just 20 days later, Kansas ran around, over and through the Huskers in an 84-67 win at Allen Fieldhouse. That loss was the beginning of the end for Nee's castaways, who lost nine of their last 12 conference games.

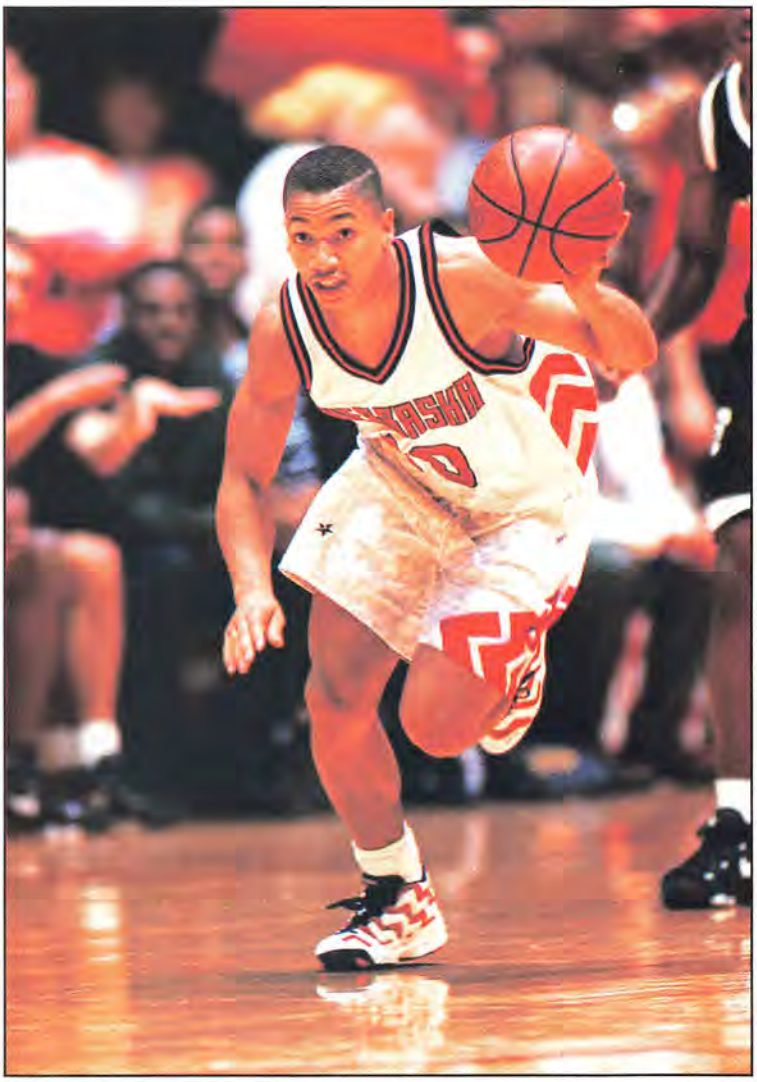
Critics pointed to a soft pre-Big Eight schedule as part of the Huskers' demise. Nebraska boasted a 12-2 non-conference mark, with its biggest win coming at the expense of highly touted Michigan State. But scratch the Spartans, and the pre-Big Eight slate looked like a Who's Who of Division I-AA: Northeast Louisiana, Idaho State, Western Illinois and Northeastern Illinois.

This year's menu was different, which, according to Husker players and coaches, should make a difference at the end of Big Eight play and post-season fortunes.

"I think we've played well against some tough competition," guard Erick Strickland said. "I think we've learned a lot from our losses this year. We have a better feeling about where we are at as a team.

"Going into the Big Eight season, you have to be prepared," Strickland said. "This schedule has prepared us."

This season, Nebraska defeat-



Speedy freshman point guard Tyronn Lue (above) has had a tendency to play out of control at times. In a 75-65 loss to Iowa State Feb. 10, Lue dished out four assists but committed seven of the Huskers' 19 turnovers.

Center Mikki Moore (left) averaged 10 points a game in the first half of the season but scored less than three points a game in five straight losses.

Nebraska Basketball TIMELINE

Nov. 26 Nebraska upsets Minnesota 96-85 to win the Big Island Invitational.

Dec. 1 Jaron Boone named Most Valuable Player of the Ameritus Classic.

Dec. 16 Northern Iowa upsets the Huskers 109-104 by making a Devaney Center-record 15 three-pointers.

Jan. 3 Nebraska beats a ranked opponent for the first time this season with a 85-69 win over Texas.

Jan. 13 Huskers lose to Oklahoma in triple overtime, 117-100.

Jan. 31 Boone is benched for the second half of a 77-68 loss at Kansas State.

Feb. 2 Coach Danny Nee suspends Boone indefinitely.

Feb. 7 Boone returns from his suspension; scores a team-high 20 points.

Feb. 10 Huskers suffer fifth consecutive loss, 74-59, at Iowa State.

Feb. 11 Omaha World-Herald columnist Tom Shatel asks: "Should Nee Lose His Job?"

Feb. 12 Eleven of 13 Husker players skip practice.

Feb. 13 Nine players meet with Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Byrne to complain about Nee.

ed Pac 10 contender Oregon twice, split with Minnesota, lost a narrow 69-66 decision to Mississippi State in the championship game of the Far West Classic, and rallied for wins against Texas and Long Beach State.

"This has been as competitive a nonconference schedule as we've seen in years," Nee said. "A schedule like this forces you to play good defense, it forces you to score X amount of points, and it forces you to learn how to deal with good pressure defenses."

One thing a tough schedule can't always help a team with is attitude. The Huskers have been on an emotional rollercoaster since the Big Eight schedule began.

The ride began when Jaron Boone, a senior guard, was benched at halftime of the Kansas State game on Jan. 31.

After the game, Boone did not return to Lincoln with the rest of the team. He left Bramlage Coliseum with three friends through an upper exit while the rest of the team left from a lower exit. The next day, Nee announced Boone was suspended indefinitely for "disciplinary reasons."

Boone was the target of criticism by fans who said the senior guard spent more time jawing with the crowd than playing during games and his play was generally described as "sporadic" and "lackadaisical" by callers to several sports "Shock Talk" radio shows.

Dressed in street clothes, Boone watched from the bench as Nebraska lost to Iowa State 75-65 Jan. 27 in Lincoln. He returned to the lineup in a 99-98 loss to Missouri Feb. 7, scoring a team-high 20 points. Nee said Boone showed renewed leadership after his suspension.

But less than a week later, trouble set in again. After the Huskers suffered their fifth straight loss — their longest losing skid in six seasons — 11 players skipped a scheduled practice Feb. 12. The next day, nine players met with Nebraska athletic director Bill Byrne. Nee said he was aware of the meeting but didn't know any details.

At his weekly press conference, Nee defended his program.

"Two weeks ago, we were 3-1 and 15-4 and feeling pretty good about ourselves," he said. "Then we got on this losing streak and everything went kaput.

"Are you going to judge Danny Nee on the last two weeks or judge Danny Nee on the last nine-and-a-half years? I think our record speaks for itself."

Nee still sees three keys to Nebraska's final Big Eight success, which could ulti-

Senior Erick Strickland's role as the team's defensive stopper has complemented his consistent play on offense.

mately lead to a berth and a solid showing in the NCAA tournament.

Consistency

The Huskers opened conference play with three straight wins, then lost their next five games.

Nebraska trailed by one at halftime against Kansas at the Devaney Center Jan. 21, only to lose by 15, 88-73. Against Missouri in Columbia, the Huskers came from 20 points down only to lose by one when Tom Wald's layup slid off the rim and Hamilton's follow shot was short.

Nebraska looked completely flat against Kansas State and in both losses to Iowa State, but showed tremendous spark and balanced scoring against Missouri. It's recipe like that which usually doesn't lead to NCAA Tournament success.

Defense

Nebraska physically pounded Mississippi State and Texas early in the season and that appears to be the answer to the defensive riddle. The loss of power forward Chris Salee, whose eligibility came to an end after the first semester, has been painful. But the addition of the 6-foot-7 Garner, and the 6-9 Hamilton has helped Nebraska match up with some of the deeper Big Eight opponents.

The consistency of the Huskers' defense must be improved as well. While having little trouble playing defense against the great teams, Nebraska's letdowns against the unheralded foes has been costly.

In a four-game span against Mississippi State, Oregon, Texas and Long Beach State, Nebraska went 3-1, and allowed a combined 92-of-264 (34 percent) field goal performance. But against Grambling State, Creighton and Northern Iowa, the Huskers allowed an average of 85.3 points per game.

Proper execution

The Huskers need to establish better consistency on offense, too. In mid-February, they were averaging nearly 18 turnovers a game. That number was up from 15 a game that they averaged last year.

Some of the miscues can be linked to Lue's inexperience at running a Division I offense. The speedy Lue can definitely score when called upon, but his assist to turnover ratio (2:1) isn't what you would want from your point player.

Boone's 20 points against the Tigers was comforting, but his previous outings left much to be desired from a reliable scorer. Prior to the Missouri game, he was averaging only 11.7 points per game and connecting on only 38.8 percent of his shots from the field in conference play.

Time is of the essence for Nebraska, but nobody appears to be pushing the panic button just yet.

According to Strickland, the biggest difference between this year and years' past, is that the team isn't currently concentrating on the NCAA tournament.

"I don't think we are looking at the NCAA right now," Strickland said. "The Big Eight is the key. If we do what we're supposed to do there, the NCAA's will fall into place."

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David City
Total Comfort Htg & A/C

Dodge
Wagner Well Plbg & Htg

Exeter
A-Line Heating

Fremont
All Systems Heating & A/C

Grand Island
Burtle & Harrahill Heating

Hastings
Dial Heating & A/C

Howells
Baumert Electric

Lawrence
Mick's T.V. & Appliance

McCook
Volz Plumbing & Heating

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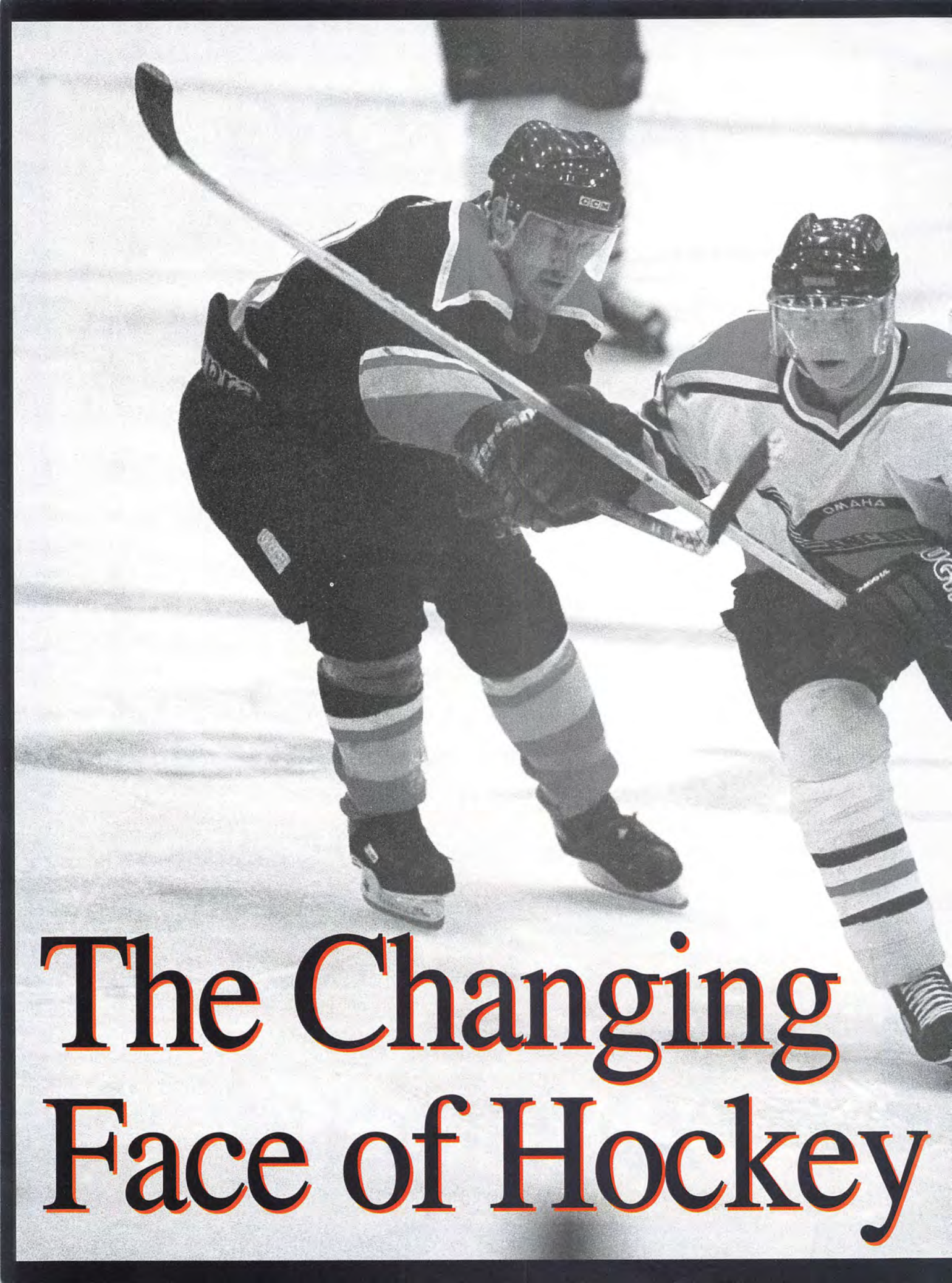


The Changing Face of Hockey

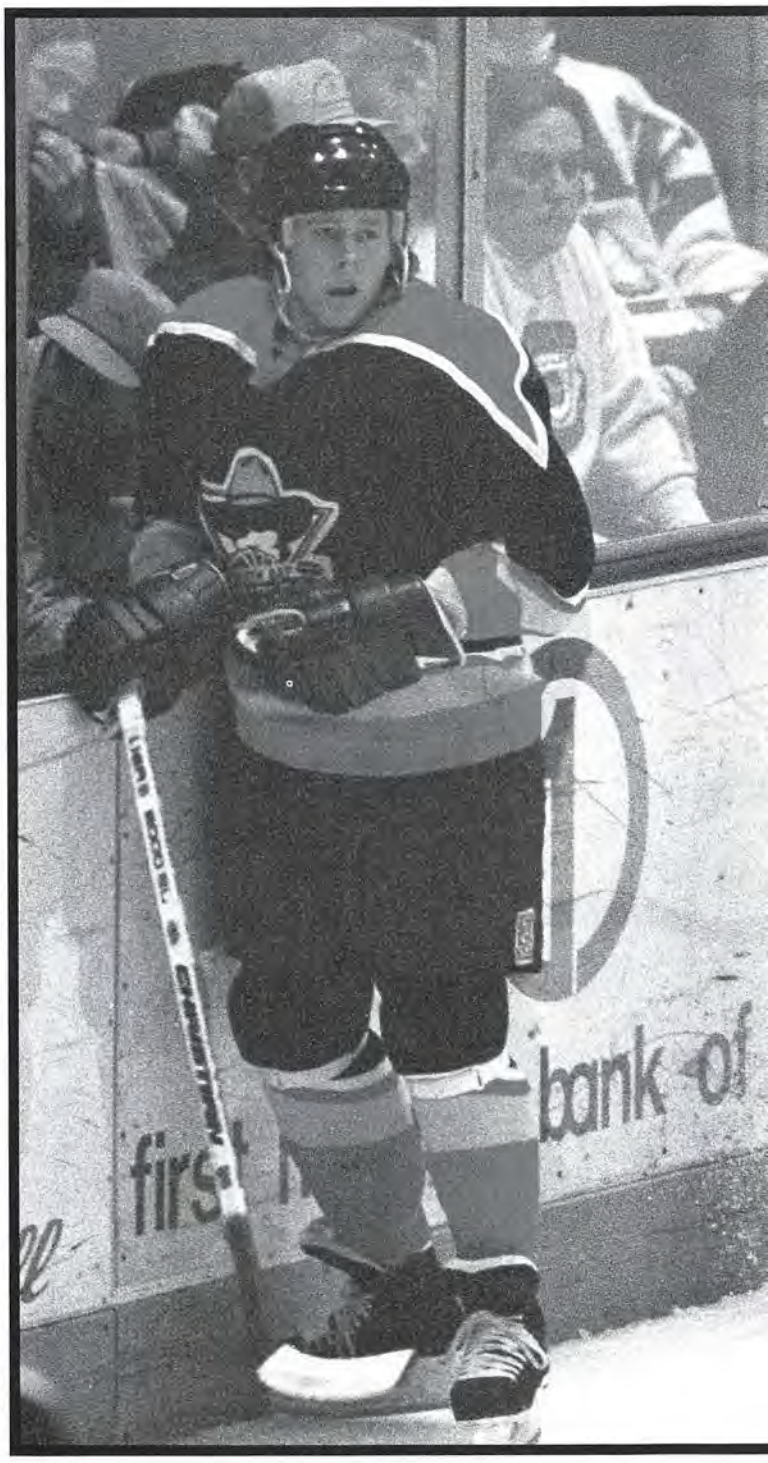
No longer a black-and-blue sport, hockey now relies on finesse and skill

Story by
Lyle Michaels

Photos by
Eric Francis

"I went to a fight and a hockey game broke out."

Once a sarcastic cross-check used to describe the violence that marked the game of hockey, taken literally, the phrase today is actually not far from the truth. Local hockey buffs tell tales of the old Omaha Knights and of skirmishes that



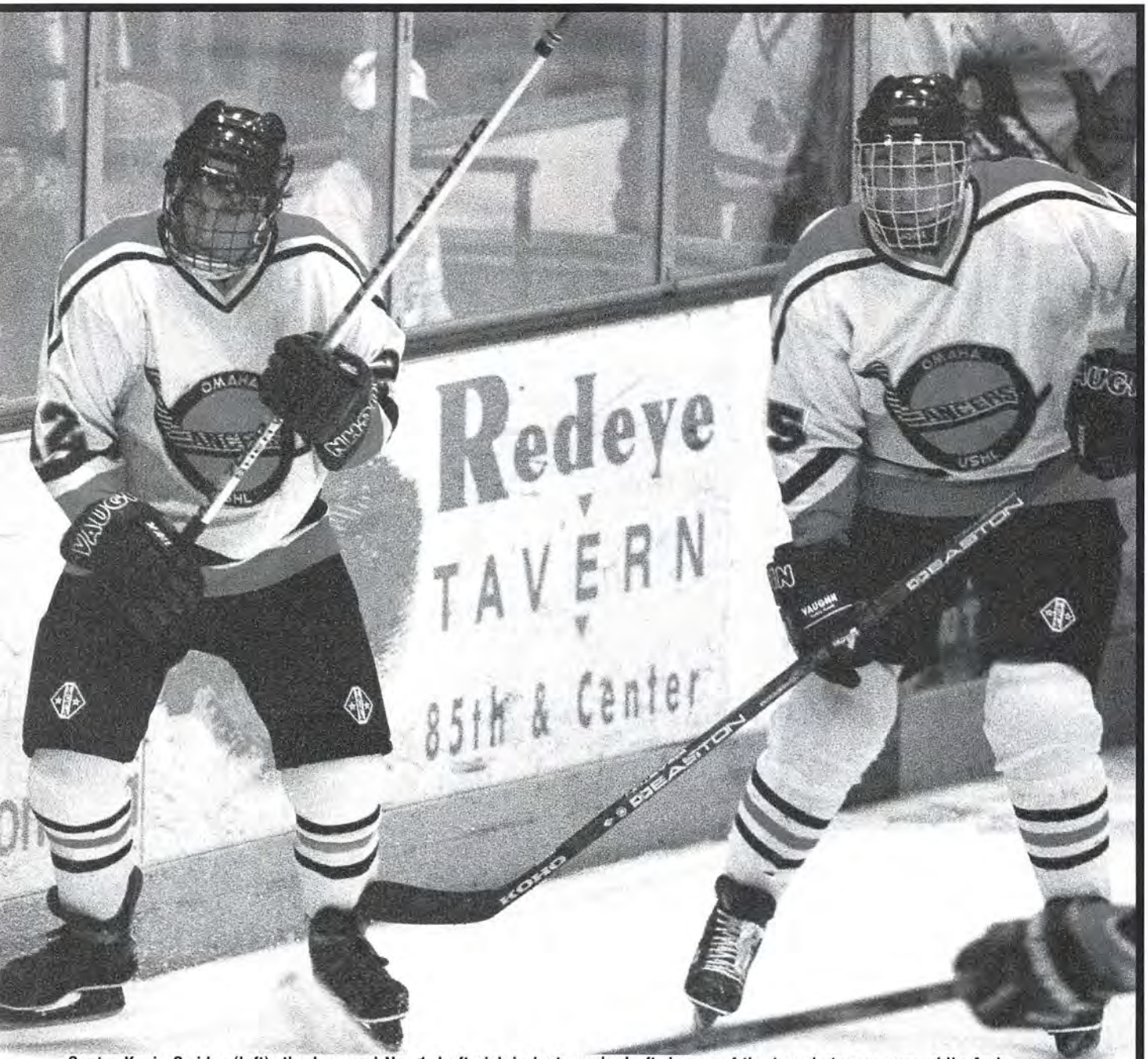
at times included players, as well as fans. Visual images of missing teeth, black eyes, broken noses and stitched foreheads helped to further paint a picture of hockey players as hooligans on skates.

When hockey returned to Ak-Sar-Ben Coliseum in 1988 after a 13-year absence, many fans of Omaha's new United States Hockey League team, the Lancers, showed up expressly to watch gloves drop and fists fly. The attention on fighting reached a peak during the 1991-92 season when Omaha Police Chief James Skinner threatened to arrest Lancer players and their opponents on assault charges if they engaged in fisticuffs.

While the potential for a brouhaha still lures some fans to the rink, many find themselves having to settle for the action provided by speed, finesse and athletic agility. A focus on skill, rather than brute force, is helping to change the face of the game from the National Hockey League down to the USHL.

Longtime fans notice the change has affected the Lancers, who do not have a "team enforcer" — a player willing to be a physical force every game, absorb abuse from opponents and be willing to spend some time in the penalty box — on their roster this year.

"In past years, there has been that one player who seems to be in the middle of every fight and every little scuffle," said Brenda Rider, who with her husband Bob, has been a season ticket holder for six seasons. "This year, the checking and the fighting seems to be really toned down. And when the tempers



Center Kevin Swider (left), the Lancers' No. 1 draft pick in last year's draft, is one of the team's top scorers while Andy Jurkowski (far right), has helped the Lancers become the top defensive team in the league. At 6-feet-3, 195-pounds, Jurkowski is one of the biggest players on the team and poses an intimidating challenge for opposing forwards.

do flare up, it seems like it's always someone different."

The last two seasons, the Lancer with the knack for "getting involved" was Brendan Walsh, now a freshman playing for Boston University. Walsh, a fan favorite, collected a team-high 198 penalty minutes last season. Excluding actual game suspensions, that figure equates to more than three games spent in the penalty box.

Nonetheless, Walsh's total was only good enough to put him fourth in the league behind Sioux City's Rob Butler (220 penalty minutes). Green Bay's Jeremy Zahn (210 penalty minutes) and former Lancers teammate Eric Runyan of North Iowa (210 penalty minutes) also topped Walsh. The closest Lancer had 85 fewer penalty minutes.

"Brendan wasn't really an instigator. But, he was the kind of player that gets under your skin and you hate to play against, but you love to have on your team," Lancers Coach Mike Hastings said.

"To be honest, we don't have a so-called Brendan Walsh on our team this year. I don't think that if anyone in the league was going to describe the Omaha Lancers, it would be as a physical team. I think we're a skill team that likes to play an up-tempo game, and the reason we are that kind of team is because we have players that fit that mold."

Hastings said that while nobody on this year's team qualifies as a "team enforcer," he did single out five of his players as being among the most physical on the team. Forwards

The attention on fighting reached a peak during the 1991-92 season when Omaha Police Chief James Skinner threatened to arrest Lancer players or their opponents if they engaged in fisticuffs.

Mike Lephart, Nick Lent and John Campbell, and defensemen Andy Jurkowski and Jami Yoder are players who "give a consistent physical effort" each game.

While it's still too early in the season to draw any definitive conclusions, a review of the Lancers' first half of the season seems to indicate that the league has tightened the reins on excessive physical play. With the exception of a brawl-filled game against the Waterloo Black Hawks in mid-January, through the Lancers' first 15 home games only two sets of ejections for fighting had been handed out. This, despite a combined four games with Thunder Bay and Sioux City, both teams known for physical play and a propensity for fighting.

Hastings said the USHL has taken steps "to stay parallel with the NHL" in its efforts to clean up the game. Referees in both leagues have been focusing on calling interference penalties, as well as keeping a close eye on dangerous stick use. Players caught fighting in the last 10 minutes of a game are disqualified from that game, as well as the next. In addition, checking-from-behind is now a five-minute major penalty and an automatic game disqualification.

"This is a developmental league. We're trying to prepare kids to get scholarships to play college hockey. There is no fighting in college hockey. It's zero tolerance. You fight and you're gone," Hastings said. "If we were preparing kids for a career in the NHL, then maybe we'd have to take a little different approach."

Scott Zingerman, referee-in-chief for the USHL, said concern for players' welfare was the league's primary focus in expanding the checking-from-behind penalty. He believes stricter enforcement of the rules has been instrumental in reducing the number of skirmishes this season. It also has helped speed the game.

"It took a while to catch on, for both the players and the referees. But once we

Lancer coaches have high hopes that Brent Voorhees will blossom into one of the top defensemen in the league. Voorhees' older brother, K.J., is the Lancers' top scorer.

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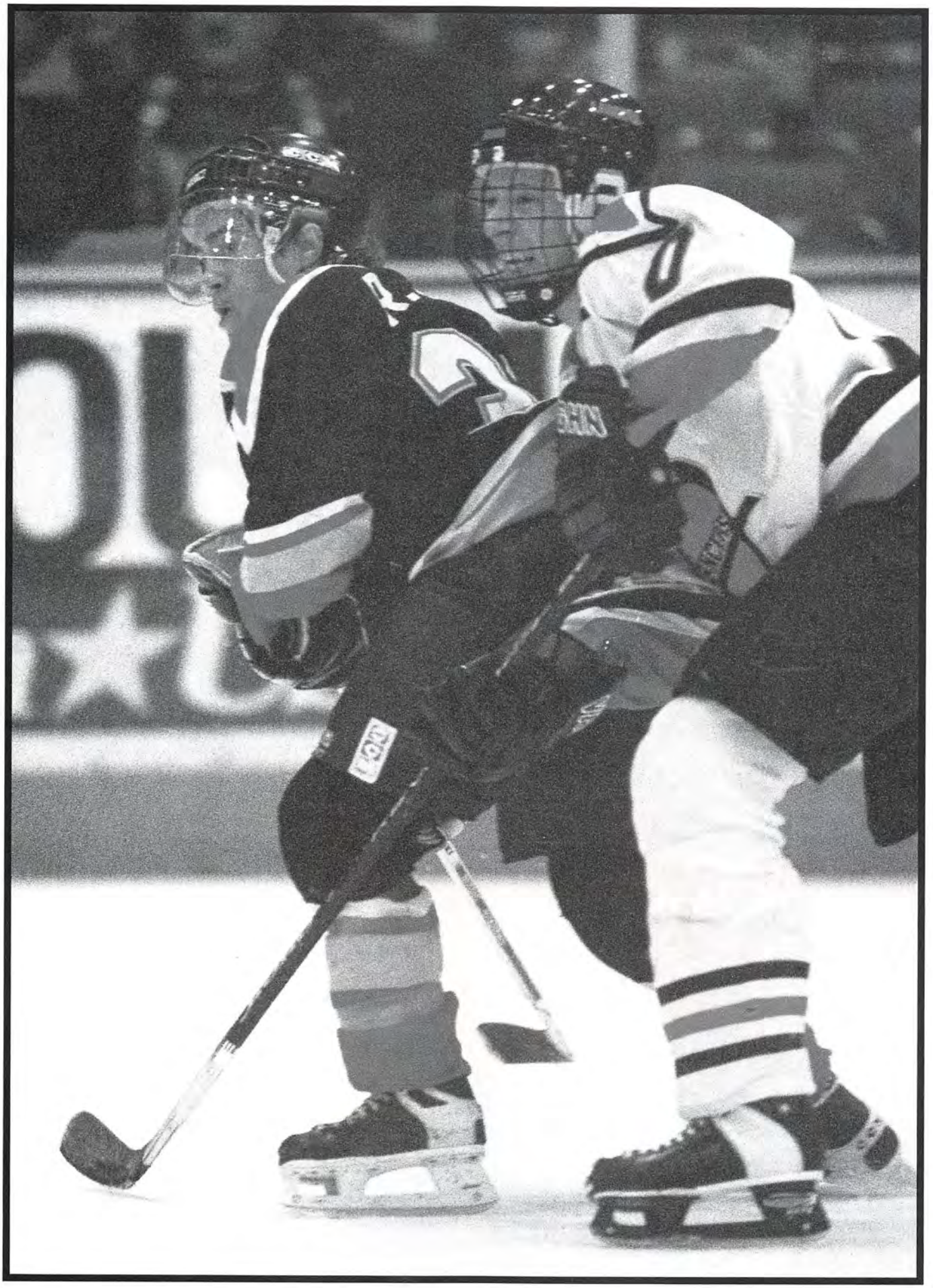

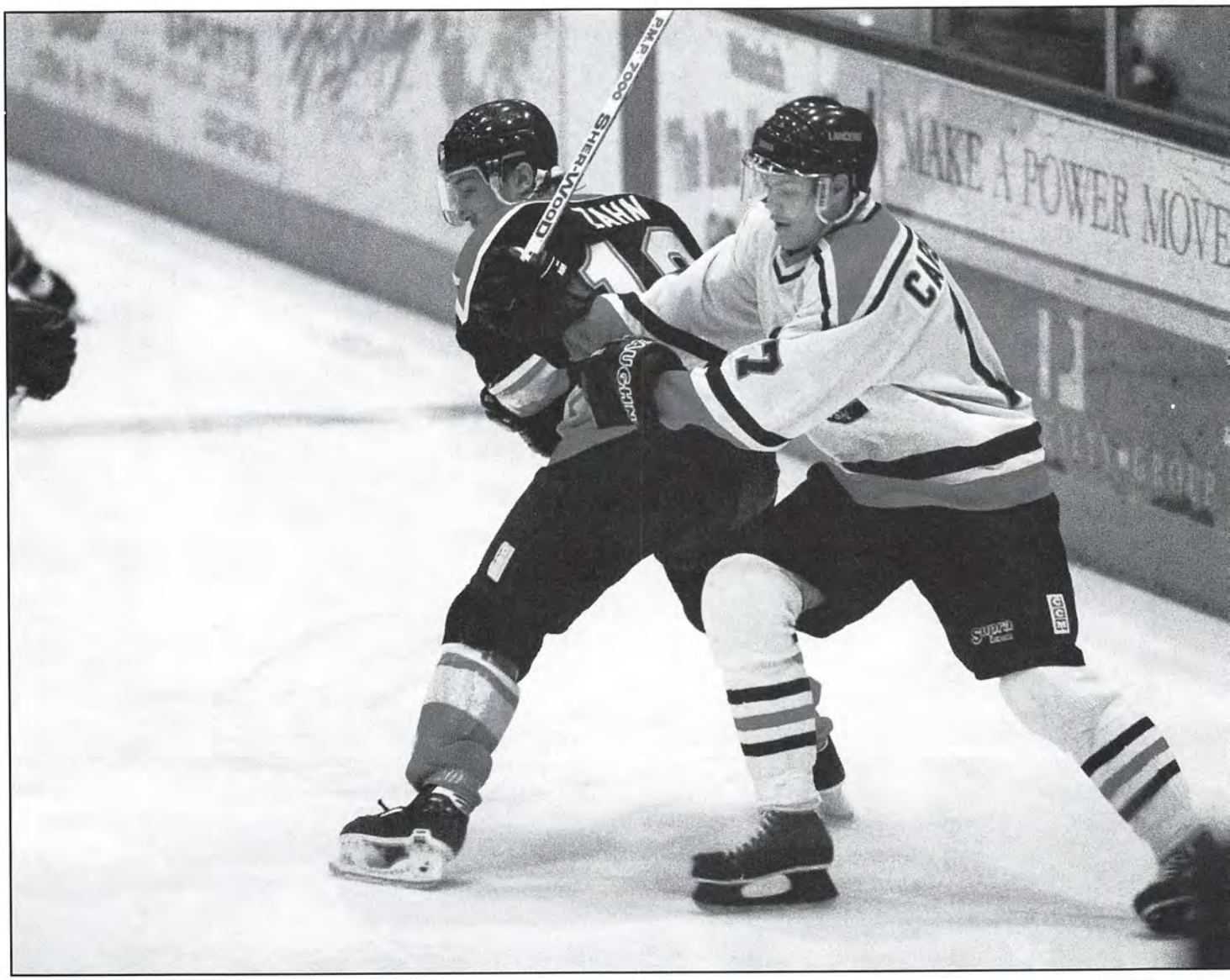

Forward Mats Carsebe (shown here checking Green Bay's Jemey Zahn) is a native of Stockholm, Sweden, who has proven to be a good mid-season addition to the Lancers. Carsebe, 19, is the lone foreigner on the club's 23-man roster.

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got the players' attention and they realized we were serious about making these calls, we've seen a marked improvement," Zingerman said.

"The kids who play in this league are hoping to get a college scholarship. We're talking some pretty big bucks and a good education when you take into consideration that we've sent some kids to schools like Princeton and some others on the East Coast. You never know when a scout is going to be in the audience, so a player is not doing himself much good if he's sitting in the penalty box all night."

Lancer forward Scott Matzka said

the USHL already has made great strides toward cleaning up the game compared to other junior leagues. The 5-foot-11, 175-pounder from Port Huron, Mich., was an offensive standout for the Petrolia Jets of the Western Ontario (Canada) Junior B League last season. Matzka said the differences in the two leagues are extreme.

"There would be three or four fights a game, and there was a lot of stick work. It was more of a clutch-and-grab style of game," Matzka said. "This league focuses more on skill. The style of play is at a much faster pace."

Matzka quickly learned last year during preseason camp, there is nothing glamorous about being on the losing end of a hockey fight.

"I had never really fought before. I'd never dropped my gloves," Matzka said. "One day in practice before the season even started, I was mouthing off to this guy and he asked me if I 'wanted to go.' Before I really knew what was going on, the other guy had dropped his gloves, gotten my helmet off and was hitting me. He pummeled me."

Hastings said teams that try to intimidate the Lancers are only playing into his team's strengths. He noted that Omaha has always been known for its skill, and that is not about to change.

"If we score on the power play against teams that are trying to intimidate us, we take them out of their game. The more that they try to intimidate us, the more power plays we get and the more goals we score. If we do not score on the power play, a team is going to consistently try to take us off our game by playing a physical game against us," Hastings said.

But don't expect to see the Lancers take their abuse lying down. The organization's philosophy, Hastings said, is to field a highly skilled team that will not be intimidated by physical play.

While Hastings emphasizes skating ability and "hockey sense" when evaluating a player, he said that each has to have "guts." Every player in his lineup, regardless of the player's offensive prowess, has to be able to play physical hockey.

"We don't teach kids to fight, but we do teach them to protect themselves," Hastings said. "We want our kids to be disciplined — to play hard and tough, but within the boundaries of the game."

"We don't teach kids to fight, but we do teach them to protect themselves."
— Lancers Coach Mike Hastings

The true test for the USHL, and hockey in general, will be fan acceptance of the game's effort to cleanse itself. Will fans still come out to watch hockey if it's less physical? Hastings thinks so.

"First of all, I don't think you're ever going to take the aggressiveness and the fighting completely out of the game because it's played at such a high tempo," Hastings said. "It's a collision sport and the physical stuff is going to happen."

"But I think the fans will continue to come out if we continue to be successful. If we're a team that doesn't play physical and we lose, nobody's going to come out to watch us. But, we've been pretty successful at getting kids in here with a high skill level who are not intimidated by those teams who want to play physical hockey."

Zingerman is confident that fan interest in hockey will continue its ascent, noting that attendance around the league is up significantly this season at every USHL venue.

"Fighting is part of the game — you're never going to take it out completely. But the days of 'goon hockey' are a thing of the past. The new rules, both in the USHL and the NHL, have enhanced the game. People just want hard, clean hockey — more finesse, more skating and more body checks." ■

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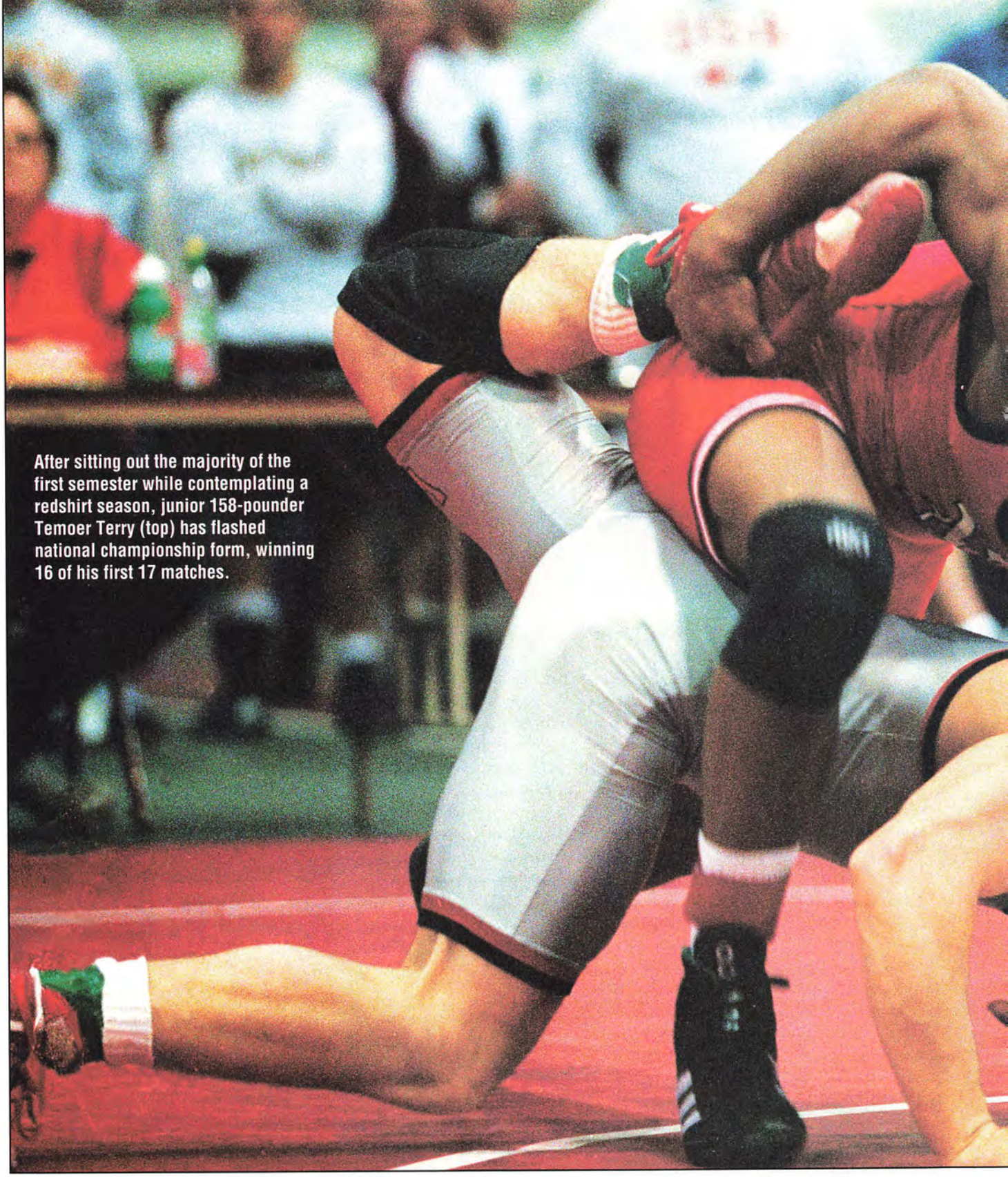
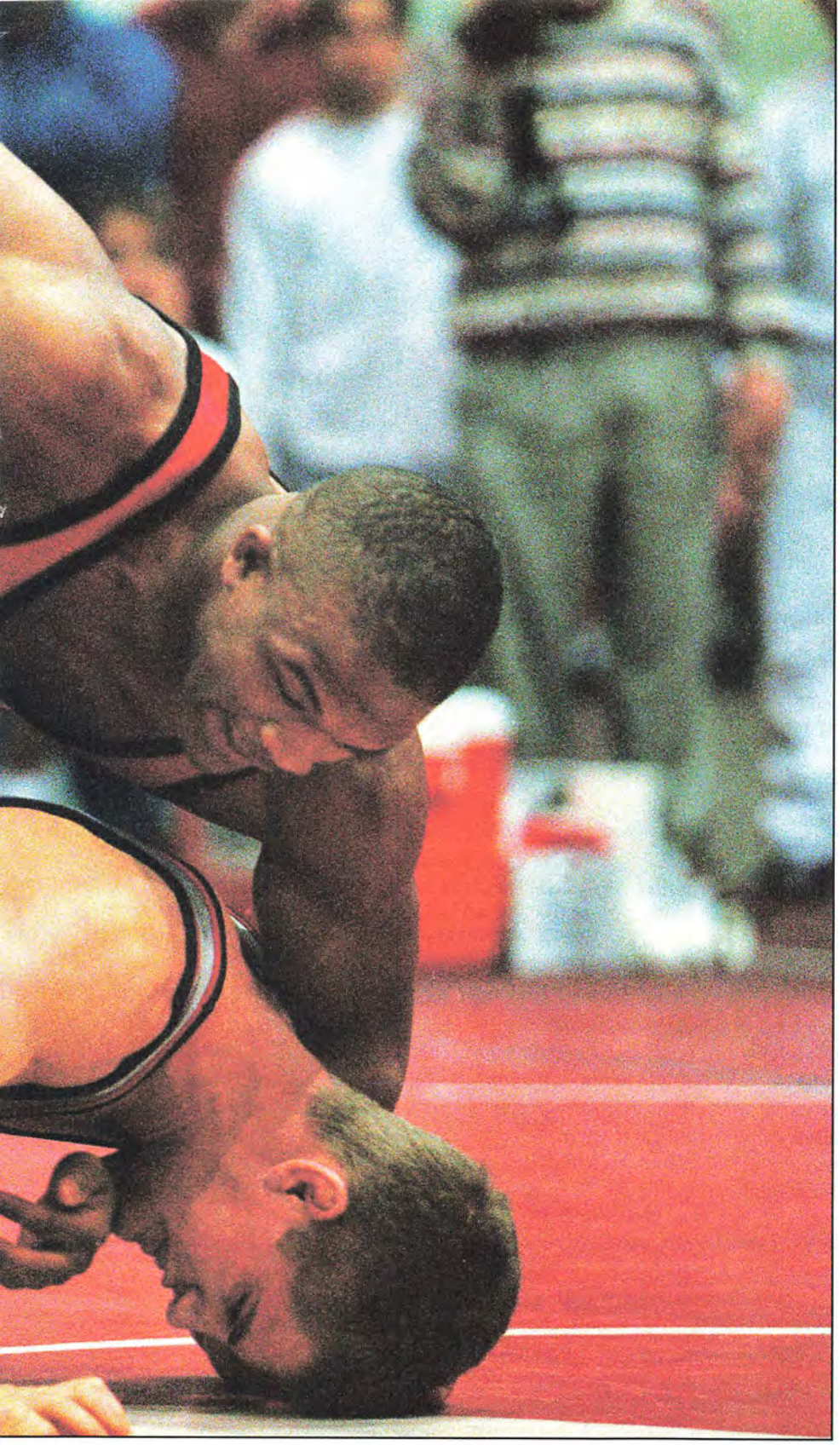


After sitting out the majority of the first semester while contemplating a redshirt season, junior 158-pounder Temoer Terry (top) has flashed national championship form, winning 16 of his first 17 matches.

Pinning Down A



nother Title

Following Temoer and Thompson's lead, the Husker wrestlers hope for their time on top.

Story by Brian Hill
Photos by Bob Berry

Heavyweight Tolly Thompson admits he reached the peak sooner than he expected. Now, his Nebraska teammates hope to join him at the top of college wrestling.

Thompson became the first wrestler in school history to win a national championship as an underclassman. His hopes for his junior season include repeating his national title of a year ago and adding a team title to it this time at the NCAA Championships in Minneapolis later this month.

"That's the team goal every year," Thompson said. "Especially in this program that's come so far in so few years. That's the only goal we can have now — being national champs. If we all come together, we're going to do it, I think."

Eleventh-year Coach Tim Neumann knows how far the program has come.

"I remember the first time while I was a head coach we broke into the top 20," Neumann said. "I was on an airplane, and

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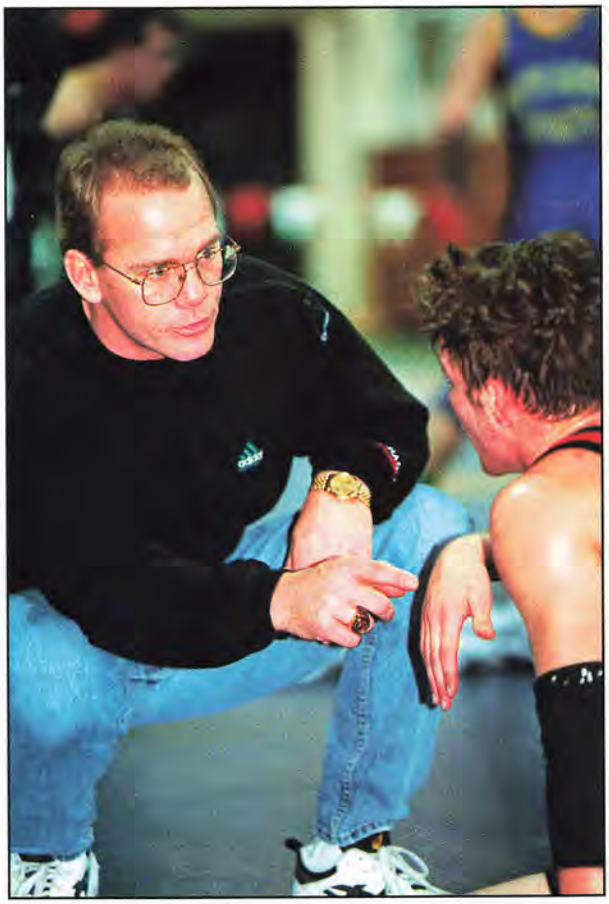
I bought a USA Today, not even knowing the rankings were going to be in there. We broke in at 19th, and it was the first time in like 2 1/2 years that we'd been in the top 20, and I was like a little kid. I was showing everybody in the airplane around me. You know, 'that's my team.' And now, if we'd be 19th, I'd probably get fired. It's just changed so much."

In 1995, the Huskers rebounded from a disappointing '94 season to finish sixth at the NCAA Championships and win the school's second Big Eight Conference title in three seasons. The highest NCAA finish was a third-place effort in 1993, and Nebraska is No. 3 in the latest ratings this season.



Head Coach Tim Neumann, the school's all-time winningest wrestling coach, has seen this year's team flourish despite facing ranked teams in 14 of its 16 dual meets. At one time, Nebraska was second in the Amateur Wrestling News poll.

"The recruiting is easier because we have a tradition now," said Neumann, a three-time Big Eight Coach of the Year and the winningest coach in Nebraska history. "We have a reputation of treating our athletes well and graduating everyone. It's an internal pressure that's greater, a lot greater now than it used to be."

Thompson, Neumann's third national champion, is rated No. 1 again. The Janesville, Iowa, native said he set a goal of being a national champion when he came to Nebraska.

"I tried not to look that far ahead. I knew I wanted to be a national champ in four years. It came a little early, I thought. But that's more power to me, and I was pretty happy with it.

"I'm going to break most of the records the way I'm going, and that's kind of a goal I've gotten in the last six months because I've won a national title.

"That was one of my big goals. Now that I've won a national title, I want to win two more. That's a big concern. But on top of that, I want to be the winningest wrestler in Nebraska history."

Thompson began his junior season with 74 wins, 60 victories from breaking the school record, and won 40 consecutive matches until a loss in mid-January. A week later, he became only the eighth Husker wrestler to notch 100 career victories.

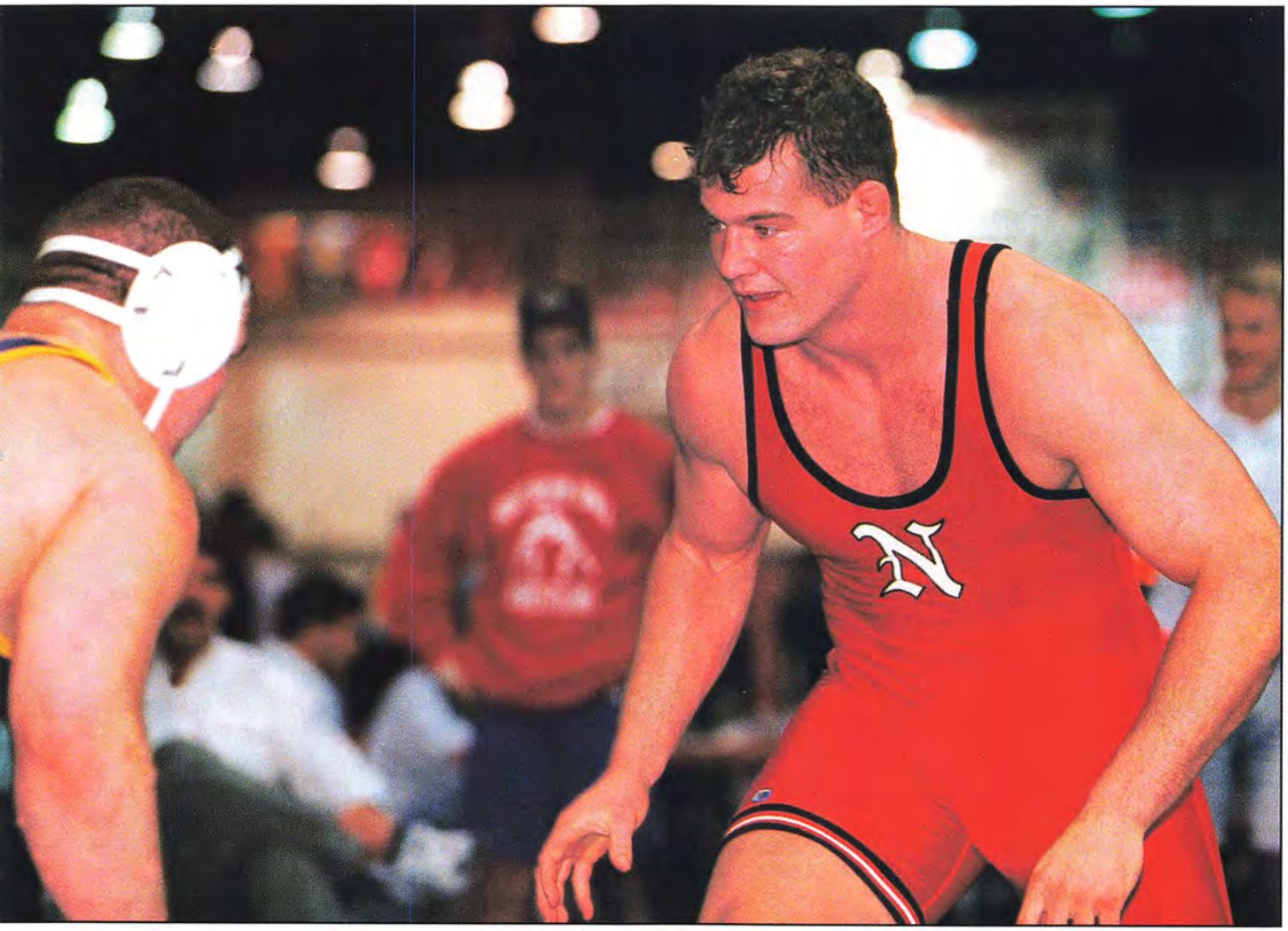
"I'd like to have like 110 by the end of the year," he said. "Then next year, hopefully before Christmas, I can have that record broken, which would be nice, then I'd be able to set it high where nobody can get it."

Part of his inspiration dates back to high school, when he was a two-time Iowa state runner-up at 190 pounds.

"All the way through, all I've ever wanted to do is wrestle, and all I've ever wanted to do is win," Thompson said.

"That, in itself, keeps me going. And, another thing that keeps me going is not ever winning a state title. But I'd give up four of them right now for that one national one I got. I got second twice, and I'd beaten both guys who beat me in the finals like four or five times."

He doesn't regret becoming a



Defending NCAA heavyweight champion Tolly Thompson has established himself as a strong favorite for a repeat title this season. Thompson has posted over 30 wins for the third consecutive season, becoming just the fourth Husker to have three 30-win seasons at Nebraska. Just a junior, Thompson is sure to become Nebraska's all-time leader in career victories next season.

college heavyweight.

"When you don't have to go through weight cutting in this sport, it's the best sport in the world," said Thompson, who usually carries between 230 and 245 pounds on his 6-foot-3 frame. "That's why I'm so lucky to be a heavyweight. I made the decision to go heavyweight, but I still had the skills of a little guy. That's what separates me from the rest of the heavyweights."

Thompson said he's ready to assume more of a leadership role on the Husker squad.

"Everybody looks up to me like 'he's the national champion, and a lot of people follow what he does,' " Thompson said.

"They see me working hard, and I'm the heavyweight. Usually, the heavyweights are the lazy ones. I've got to perform my best to help out the team,

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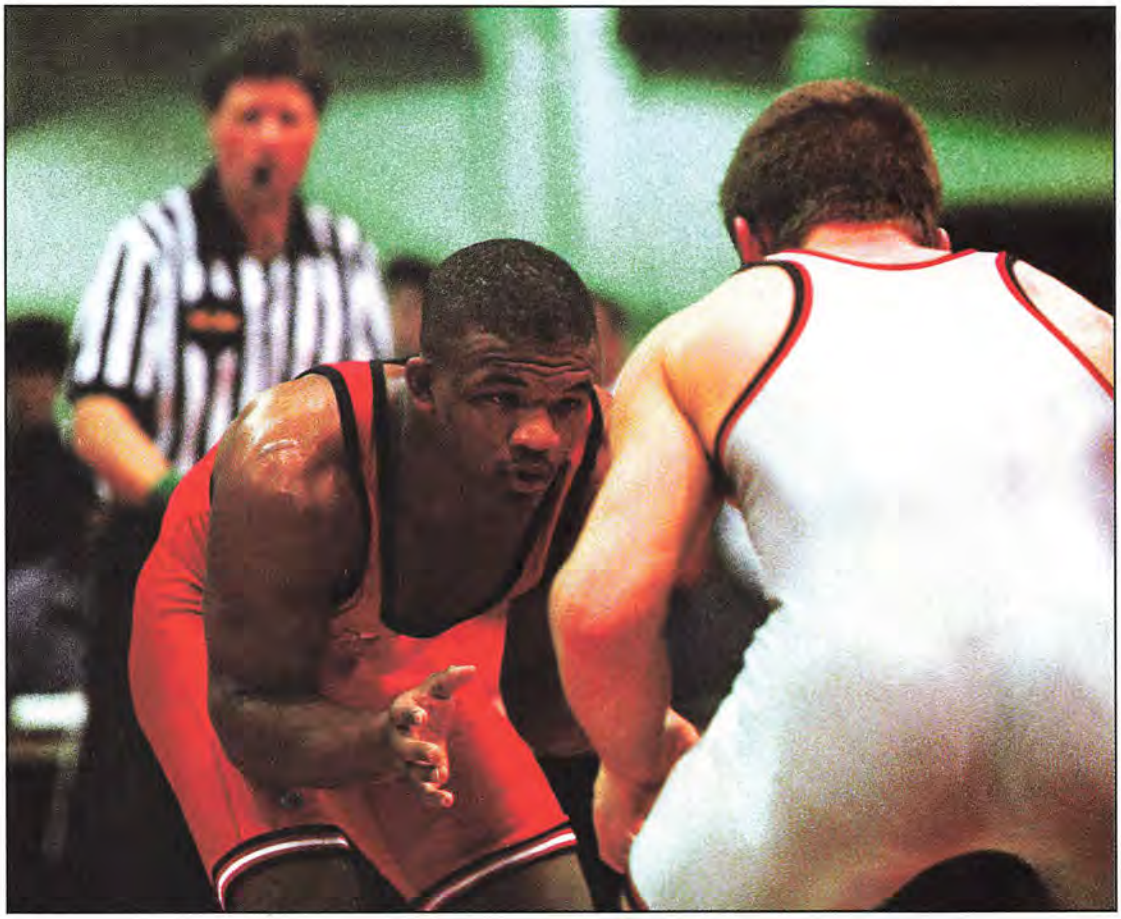

Terry (left) won tournament titles at the Northern Iowa Open and Great Plains Invitational and posted a 9-4 victory over Illinois' Ernest Benion, the 158-pound defending NCAA champion, at the National Dual Meet Championships in Lincoln.

but there's nine other guys on the team. That's what's so great about wrestling. You're an individual, and then on top of that you've got the team."

Three other All-Americans are back in juniors Temoer Terry and Ryan Tobin, and sophomore Brad Canoyer. Terry, who finished fourth in the nation at 150, wrestled only one meet during the first semester while considering a redshirt season and has moved up to 158. Tobin placed eighth at 190 last season, and Canoyer was sixth at 118 as a redshirt freshman.

They are part of a team with so much depth it keeps things interesting in the practice room, Neumann said.

"Depth is good in that when injuries or sickness occur, we've got someone to put in," Neumann said. "They all want to start, and they all want to wrestle off, and they all want to challenge. You want them to, but when you're trying to peak a team, you want them peaking toward a goal of being a national champion.

"And what's happening, and what happened last year, is that their goal was to make the team because the competition in the room was so tough. We had probably three or four weights where we had an All-American backed up by a guy who probably would've been an All-American. There aren't very many programs that have that."

How did Neumann build so much depth?

"We're able to get better recruits for less scholarships, just because of the program being where it is," he said. "People think that there's probably only five or six programs that have a shot at a national championship, and there's probably 10 or 11 programs that can create individual national champions, so kids limit where they're going to go because of that. We happen to be one of those schools. So we can get a kid that's being offered a full ride for a little less than that, which allows us to build up some depth."

Neumann said the only thing the

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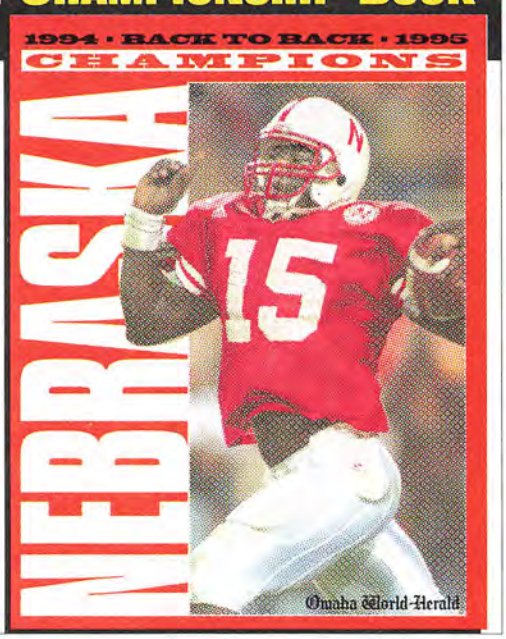

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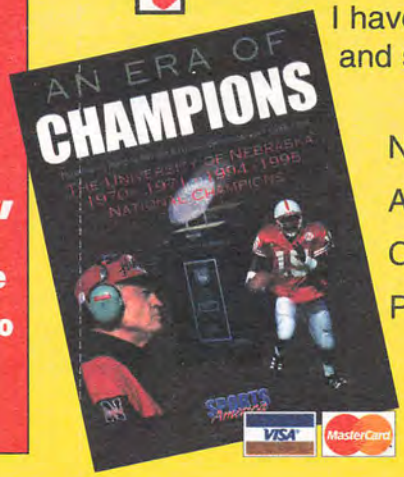

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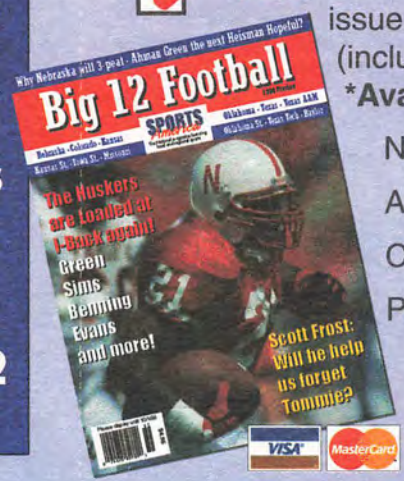

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"Our attendance is rising," he said. "It's getting more and more, but we're not drawing like say Penn State or Iowa. We're probably like sixth or seventh in the nation as far as attendance, but we don't have a home. Sometimes we're in the (Sports Center) arena, sometimes we're in the track, sometimes we're in the Coliseum. We don't have a home, and I think until that happens, until people can relate us to we're going to see the event at wherever the heck it is, we're going to have a hard time developing a base of over 1,000 fans.

"The Coliseum, I think has really helped make Nebraska volleyball. We had the Big Eights and the National Duals there last year, and we had huge crowds and they were into it. It's super.

"I always thought that if we ran a clean and class program and we won that attendance would take care of itself. I think it's gotten big enough to where the kids like to wrestle at home, but it isn't to where other teams don't like to come in here because the crowds are so nasty and so big.

If they would let us in there (the Coliseum), I think that would happen. This (Sports Center) is too big. We could put 5,000 in here but it's still going to look like we don't have a good crowd. And that's unfortunate, but that's just the way it is."

Thompson said he sees the perception changing at Nebraska.

"I think I see it more because I'm a national champ, and everybody wants to talk to me," he said. "Football, they're such a powerhouse, it's hard to compete with those guys.

"Everything is football, football, football, and I'm from the state of Iowa, and everything there is wrestling."

"The University of Iowa, Iowa State back in the '70s. That's kind of where football's been here for so many years and years. It's going to take a number of years to get people switched over. I can't wait to see the day when that Sports Center's full." ■

"We're able to get better recruits for less scholarships, just because of the program being where it is."

— Nebraska coach Tim Neumann

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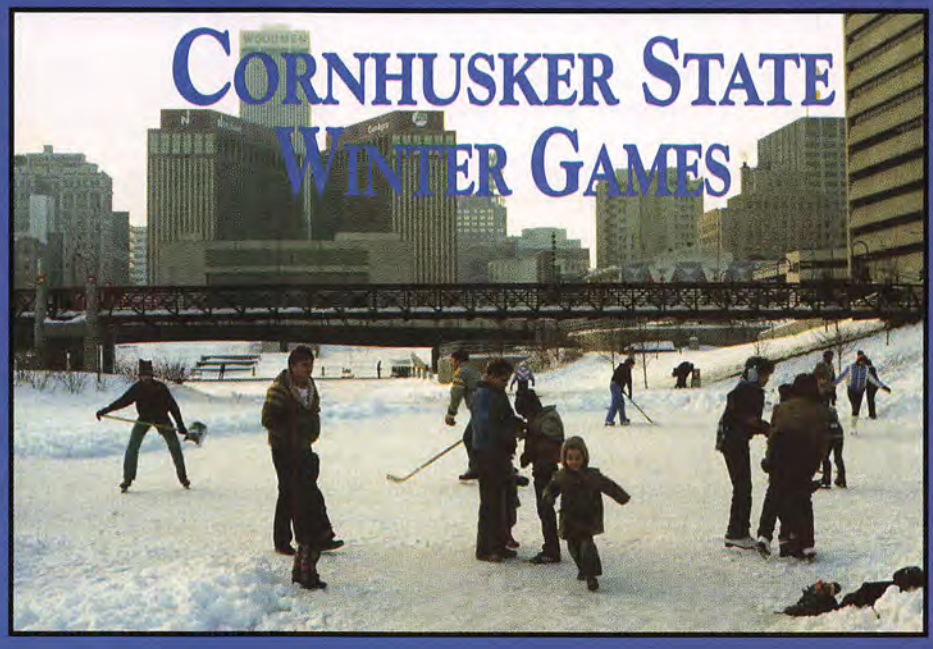


Where are they now

BY RON POWELL

At Home On The Sidelines

Dave Hoppen had his day in the NBA. These days he's content to find his place in the business world.

Dave Hoppen's basketball these days is limited to pick-up games around Omaha and playing on Dean Thompson's team in the Idelman Summer League.

After seven seasons of hopping from team to team in the National Basketball Association and the Continental Basketball Association, Nebraska's all-time leading scorer has hung up his sneakers and started handing out business cards.

Hoppen and business partner Dale Engskov recently opened Cornerstone Financial Group, a Christian financial planning organization in Omaha. It's a career Hoppen has been preparing for since leaving professional basketball after the 1992-93 season and moving his family back to his hometown.

"Some of my friends have said I've never had a job before until now, and they're probably right," Hoppen said. "This is a new area for me, and the beginning stages have been very exciting. I was interested in business when I was in college, and now I'm getting the opportunity to put some of that knowledge to work."

A number of Hoppen's college rivals are still in the NBA, such as Oklahoma's Wayman Tisdale and Creighton's Benoit Benjamin. The 31-year-old Hoppen said he often catches himself "watching the boxscores in the paper, seeing how the guys I played against are doing."

But the 6-foot-11 Hoppen has no visions of making a court comeback. The rigors of traveling and the constant threat of being traded put too much strain on his wife, Sue, and their two children — 5-year-old son, Daniel, and 3-year-old daughter, Faith.

"I never expected to play in the pros, so I was happy just to have an opportunity to play as much as I did," Hoppen said. "I don't have any regrets with how things turned out."

> "I never expected to play in the pros, so I was happy to just have an opportunity to play as much as I did."
>
> — Dave Hoppen

The Omaha Racers still own his CBA playing rights but Hoppen — who said he wouldn't totally rule out playing for the Racers someday — said chances are slim you'll see him playing at Ak-Sar-Ben Coliseum anytime soon.

"I feel the CBA is more for guys coming out of college, trying to get experience or guys who have been to the NBA and are trying to make it back," said Hoppen, who played long enough in the NBA to earn a pension. "I loved playing in the NBA, and I can't say I wish I wasn't there now, but I don't have a burning desire to go back. I'm tired of running around with the basketball."

Hoppen's running around on the hardwood began in high school as a standout at Omaha Benson. He was part of the heralded class of 1982 that produced seven Division I players and included such greats as Ron Kellogg (Kansas), Kerry Trotter (Marquette) and Bill Jackman (who originally signed with Duke but later transferred to Nebraska).

Nebraska, badly in need of a center, concentrated its recruiting efforts on signing Hoppen. He was even the subject of a column by the Lincoln Journal-Star's Randy York, who wrote an open letter to the high school center in the newspaper explaining why Nebraska would be his best choice. Hoppen eventually chose Nebraska over Missouri and Notre Dame.

Hoppen, a three-time All-Big Eight center from 1984-86, appeared to be an

Nebraska Sports Information

Hoppen finished his career as Nebraska's all-time leading scorer despite missing the last 11 games of his senior year after suffering a knee injury. He was a third-round draft pick of the Atlanta Hawks.

NBA first-round draft pick until a knee injury at Colorado on Feb. 1, 1986, cut his senior season short.

Hoppen's patented jump hook helped him finish his college career with 2,167 points. He shot 60 percent from the field for his career and 77 percent from the free-throw line. He broke or tied 19 Nebraska records and five Big Eight standards as a Husker. Nebraska posted a 69-42 record with him in the line-up.

Hoppen became the first Husker to have his jersey (No. 42) retired. "When it happened, it didn't seem like that big of a deal," said Hoppen, now an Nebraska season ticker holder. "But as the years go on, I realize what a great honor and privilege it is."

The knee injury and subsequent surgery knocked Hoppen down to the third round of the '86 draft. Chosen by Atlanta, Hoppen was the 65th player selected that year. Hoppen spent the 1986-87 season rehabilitating the knee. The next season, Hoppen played six games with Topeka in the CBA and 39 with the Milwaukee Bucks and Golden State Warriors.

"To have to sit out that first year was really tough," Hoppen said. "Having not played in over a year, it was more a confidence thing than anything else. It's confidence that sets guys apart in the NBA, and I wasn't sure how my knee would hold up or if I could get shots off over those guys."

Hoppen, left unprotected by the Warriors after the '88 season, was chosen by Charlotte in the expansion draft. The Hornets' inaugural season turned out to be Hoppen's best as a professional. He played in 77 games and averaged 6.5 points and five rebounds a game. He netted 56 percent of his field-goal attempts and 72 percent of his free throws.

Just when it appeared Hoppen was settling in as an NBA regular, he suffered his second major injury — a shoulder separation — during a Los Angeles Summer League game during the off-season of 1989. He rested the shoulder for a month, but it never completely healed before training camp. He separated it again in a game against Utah early in the regular season.

He had surgery on the shoulder shortly afterwards and appeared in just 10 games in 1989-90.

In the middle of the next season, Hoppen was traded to Philadelphia where he played sparingly over the next year and-a-half. He did play in Philadelphia's three playoff games in '91 and sank all

Eric Francis

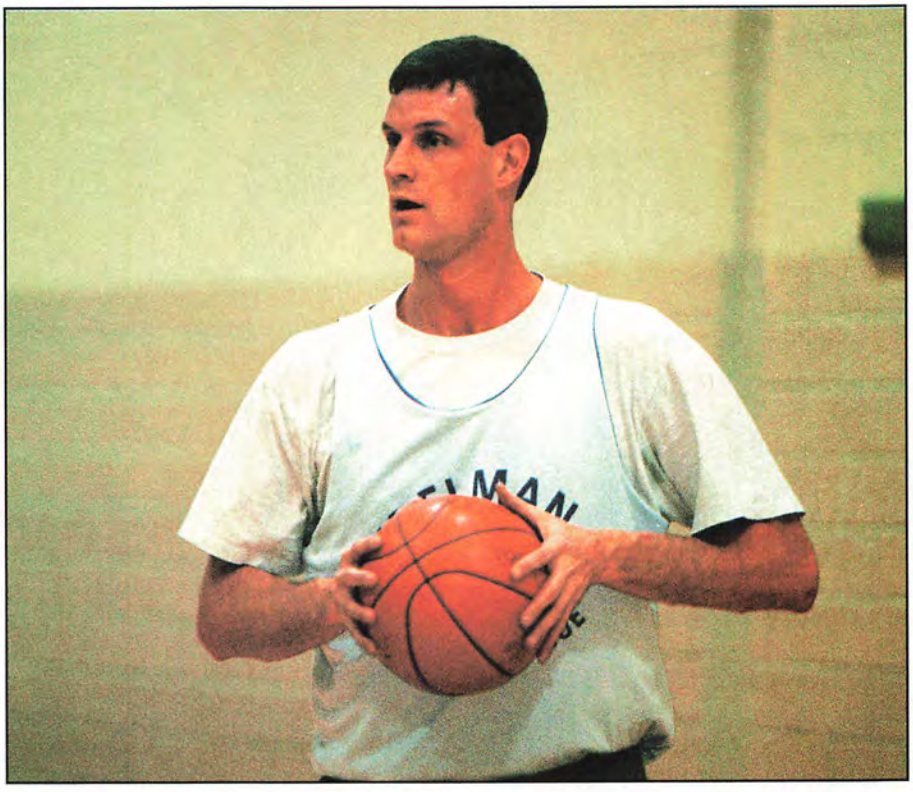
Hoppen (above) has more time to spend with his family these days. He and his wife, Sue, have two children, Daniel (right) and Faith.

three shots he attempted. Those would prove to be Hoppen's only playoff games of his eight-year pro career.

Hoppen spent the majority of the 1992-93 campaign with Rapid City and Fargo of the CBA, posting some impressive numbers.

He averaged 14.6 points a game and 8.3 rebounds while shooting 64 percent from the field and 80 percent from the foul line. He also got called up to the New Jersey Nets on a 10-day contract that season and played in two games.

"It was a strange career," Hoppen said. "I thought I would be staying in Golden State. They left me unprotected because they thought there would be no chance I would be taken (in the expansion draft). Then I got thrown in that trade to Philadelphia. It got to the point I was a journeyman by the end." ■



Eric Francis

After eight seasons of professional ball, Hoppen's playing time now consists of pick-up games at Beveridge Junior High. He has turned down offers to play for the Omaha Racers.

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BY BOB HAMAR

Sold On Wrestling Tradition

Never count Mullen out when the Broncos take the mat

Fifteen years ago, Kyle Hoyt was a typical youngster. He did all the normal things boys do in Mullen: playing with his friends, attending school and hanging out with his two older brothers, Phil and Todd, when they were home from college.

And, of course, he wrestled.

Kyle Hoyt started his wrestling career when he was just three years old. Young by most standards, but not in Mullen. That's because in Mullen, wrestling is king.

"Most kids start wrestling when they start school," said Hoyt, who's now a senior at Mullen High School. "Some start younger."

The rewards of starting a wrestling career at such a young age are evident just by looking at the school's trophy case.

Notice the seven Class D state championship trophies and one from Class C. The Broncos won their first state crown in Class C in 1969. They added back-to-back Class D titles the next two years and another in 1985. Four years later, Mullen followed a 22nd-place finish at state in 1988 with three straight titles in 1989, 1990 and 1991.

And the success continues. Since 1989, Mullen has not finished lower than fourth at the state tournament.

"It's kind of expected of Mullen wrestling to do well every year," Hoyt said. "It wouldn't be a regular year if we didn't. We kind of demand that everybody work hard in practice to do as well as they can do."

The Broncos last won a state championship in 1994, then finished second the following year.

Lori Post

Mullen has produced more individual state wrestling champions (34) than any other Class D school and has won the most Class D team titles (eight) in state history.

Coach Dan Brost, who came to Mullen from Chadron State with no intention of coaching wrestling, has seen good wrestlers come — like two-time state champs Phil (1978-79) and Todd Hoyt (1979-80) — and he's seen them go. But they left something important behind when they finished their high school careers.

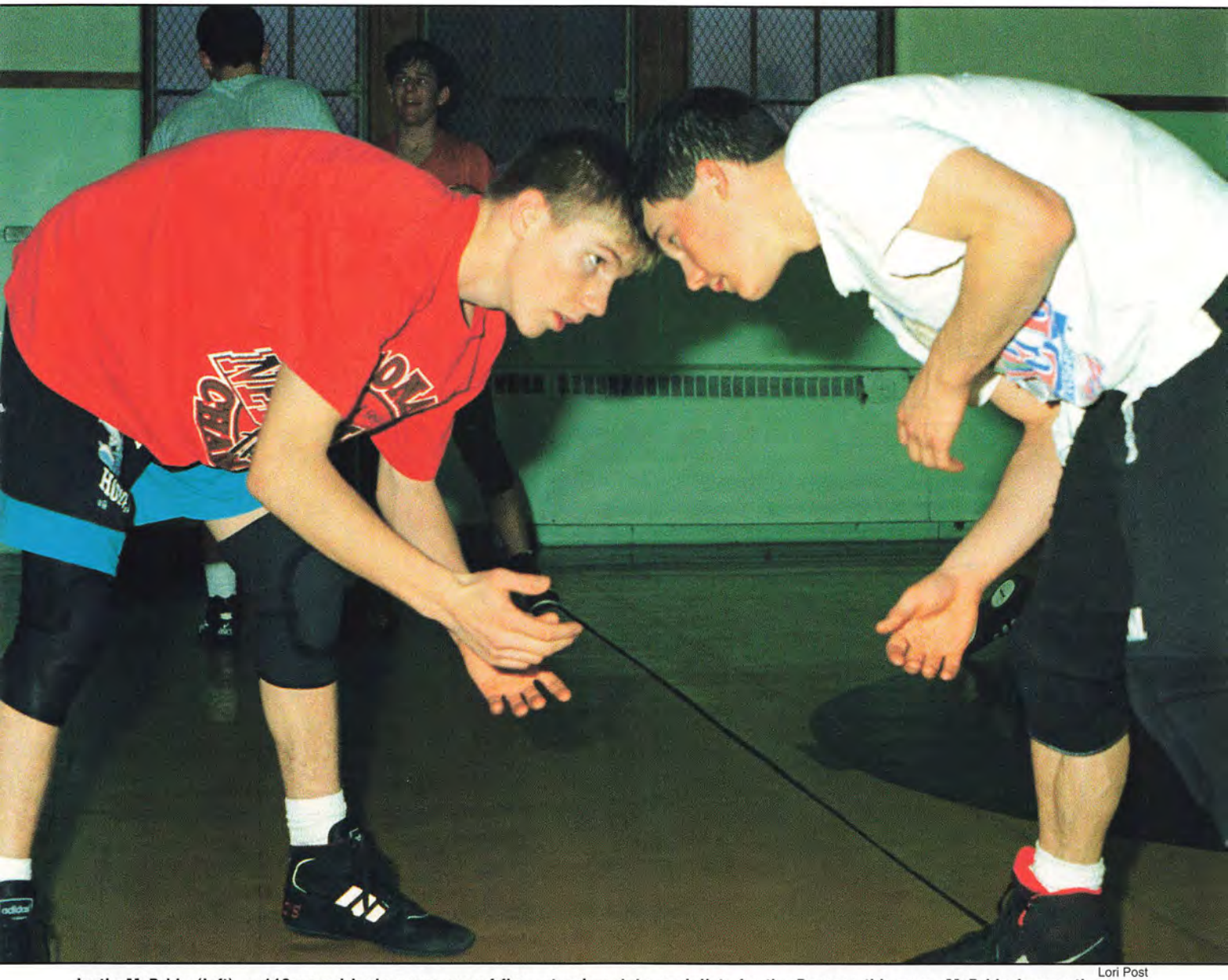
Tradition.

"There's been a lot of good athletes here with high expectations," Brost said. "They qualify for the state tournament with the idea of placing at the meet, not just going. When they get to the state meet, they expect to do well."

And Brost, who could be described as a do-as-I-say, not-as-I-did coach, expects them to succeed. A wrestler himself at Hemingford High School, Brost believes he was better suited to coaching than competing.

"Sometimes you see guys who are better at teaching it than performing it," he said.

"They qualify for the state tournament with



Lori Post

Justin McBride (left), a 119-pound junior, was one of five returning state medalists for the Broncos this year. McBride frequently works out with 125-pound junior Tyler Jenkins (right), who joined McBride as one of 11 Mullen qualifiers for this year's state tournament.

He began his coaching career at Mullen as an assistant for the 1979 team which had three state champions in the older Hoyt brothers and John Kraye. (Todd Hoyt now coaches wrestling at Anselmo-Merna High School.)

Since that time, Brost has coached wrestlers including three-time state champion Dirk Porath, who didn't lose a match from 1985 to 1987; Mitchell Rogers, who won two state championships in 1986 and 1987; Matthew Rogers, a three-time champ from 1990-1992 and Mike Kvanig, who won back-to-back titles in 1994 and 1995.

Mullen's tradition of success during the past 15 years can be traced to Brost and his staff, said Mullen Athletic Director Roger Volentine.

"We've had the same assistant (Mitch Pfeifer) here for 10 years and that's helped," Volentine said. "We've had a lot of support in the community for the program, too."

The support is there this year for another strong Mullen team. The Broncos return five state placers from last year's team in Justin McBride (fifth at 106), John Howell (second at 160), Aaron Simonson (sixth at 172), Hoyt (fourth at 215) and Mark Hassett (sixth at 275).

Greeley Coach Brian Laux, who is charged with rating teams in Class D this year, said Rushville and Mullen look like they will be the top teams at the state meet in February. Laux knows a bit about Mullen wrestling. It was his team that beat the Broncos for the Class D title at last year's state tournament.

the idea of placing at the meet, not just going." – Coach Dan Brost

We Are the Champions

Since 1967, Mullen has had 34 wrestlers win individual state wrestling titles. At the same time, the Broncos have registered 13 top three team finishes at the state tournament.

Top Three Team Finishes at State

1969	First	1989	First
1970	First	1990	First
1971	First	1991	First
1976	Third	1992	Third
1983	Second	1994	First
1984	Second	1995	Second
1985	First		

Individual State Champions

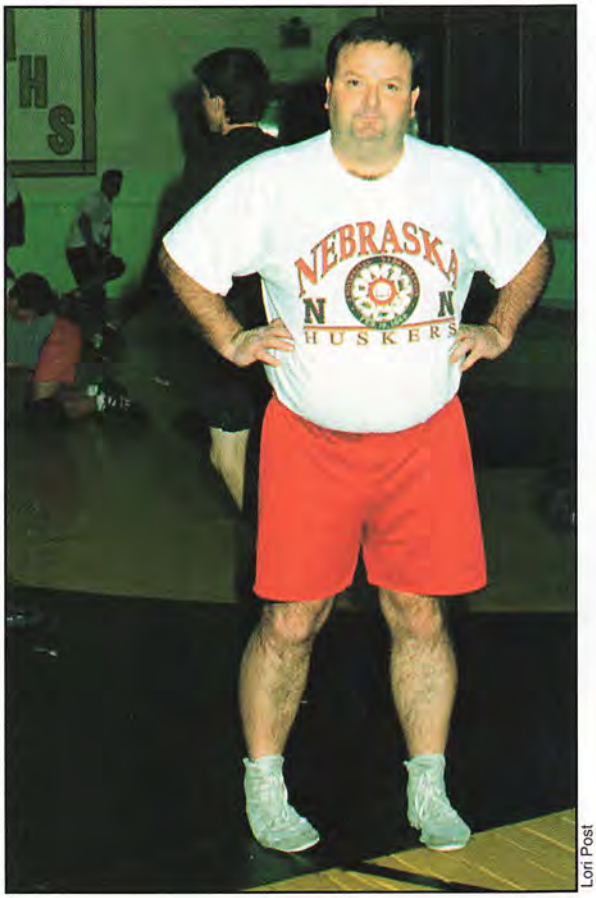
1967—Paul Hasset	Heavyweight
1969—Mark Lattin	Heavyweight
1970—Ed Arrends	123
1970—Charles Wright	185
1970—Mark Lattin	Heavyweight
1971—Ed Arrends	132
1971—Jim Bradley	167
1971—Charlie Wright	185
1976—Ron Roseberry	105
1978—Phil Hoyt	145
1979—Phil Hoyt	145
1979—Todd Hoyt	155
1979—John Kraye	Heavyweight
1980—Todd Hoyt	155
1982—Shane Folk	105
1983—Brad Porath	119
1983—Kyle Kramer	155
1984—Tony Boots	105
1985—Dirk Porath	155
1986—Mitchell Rogers	105
1986—Dirk Porath	155
1987—Mitchell Rogers	112
1987—Dirk Porath	167
1988—Kevin Younkin	103
1989—James Hassett	Heavyweight
1990—Matthew Rogers	112
1990—Tim Brannan	119
1990—Craig Clapper	125
1990—Jim Wiese	140
1990—Jason Coble	160
1991—Matthew Rogers	119
1991—Tim Brannan	125
1991—Brian Killion	171
1992—Matthew Rogers	119
1994—Mike Kvanvig	145

Lori Post

Mullen (population 554) is an isolated town located about 70 miles north of North Platte.

Since coming to Mullen in 1979, Coach Dan Brost (right) has helped the school produce 18 individual state champions. His 1994 squad established a new Class D record when eight Mullen wrestlers placed in the top six.

(Opposite page) Senior Kyle Hoyt (seen working over the top of 160-pounder John Howell) entered this year's state tournament with a 26-0 record and was one of eight unbeaten wrestlers in the Class D field.



Lori Post

Behind four-time state champions Donny and Kenny Nordhues, Greeley edged Mullen 117.5 to 95.5.

"I think it's incredible what Coach Brost has done," Laux said. "In Class D, it's usually hard to just fill positions after good wrestlers have left, but they've just reloaded every season. It's just amazing how, first of all, they get that many kids out and then how the kids respond to him and compete every year for a state title."

Mullen's wrestlers, many of whom play football, also are coming off a successful season on the gridiron. The Broncos went 11-0 before losing to Orchard in a D-1 semifinal game. Kyle Hoyt, who played guard, and Simonson, a fullback, both earned all-state honors.

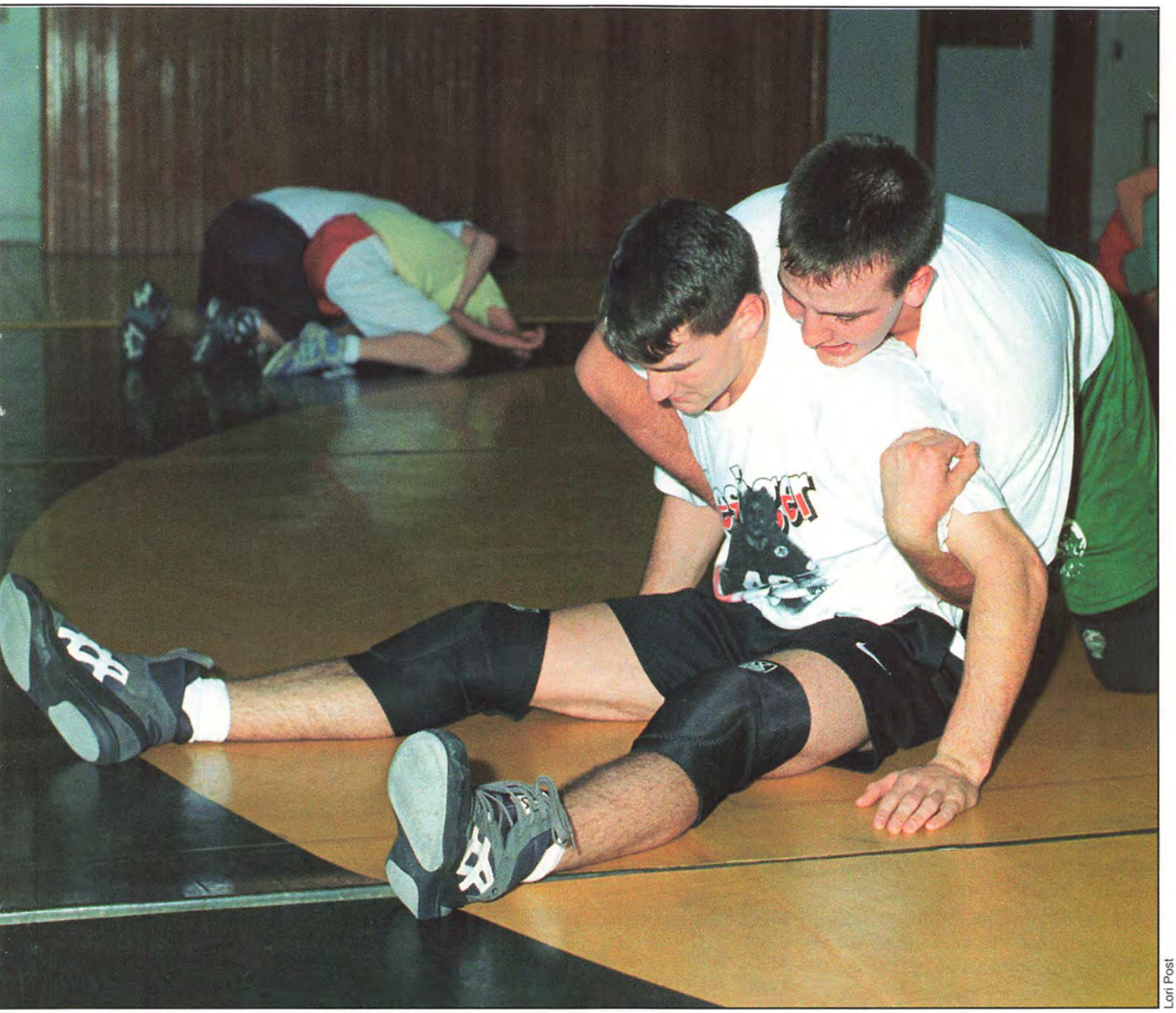
The school won its only state title in football in 1991.

Mullen has 54 boys in school this year. Fifty of those were out for football. Hoyt, who played guard for the Bronco's football team, said the two sports complement each other.

"Playing football keeps you in shape," he said. "It makes it easier for guys to get down to their weight because they're already in shape."

This year, Brost had 26 boys out for wrestling, which is the most he's ever had. Most of the remaining 28 boys in school play basketball. It's a typical frame of mind for a school which has experienced not-so-typical success.

"Everybody wants to go out for sports,'' Hoyt said. "You have your main sport (wrestling), then the others help you in that sport." ■



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BY MICHAEL CARNES

All in the Family

With coaching in her blood, Holly Sloan naturally picked up a basketball and a whistle

Her dad had a successful playing career and is one of the top coaches in the NBA. Her brother was Illinois' Mr. Basketball in 1983. Her sister Division I basketball at DePaul and Evansville and also worked for the Omaha Racers of the Continental Basketball Association.

So it seemed only natural for Holly Sloan to find herself coaching basketball at Platteview High School as an assistant girls' coach.

Sloan said basketball wasn't the main reason she took a teaching job in the southern Sarpy County community. In fact, coaching was not even a planned part of her first teaching job.

"I had heard a lot about the school system here, and the area reminds me a lot of my hometown of McLeansboro, Ill.," she said. "They asked me to coach, and I thought I'd give it a try, but I don't know how it will fit into my career.

"I really like working with this age group of kids, and I want to improve as a teacher and get the most out of my kids as students and people. Coaching is just an added bonus."

Eric Francis

At 26, Holly Sloan is one of the youngest — and the only female coach — at Platteview Central Junior High School. In addition to assisting with the girls basketball team, she is also a coach of freshman volleyball and junior high track.

Sloan is the daughter of Jerry Sloan, coach of the NBA's Utah Jazz and a standout player with the Chicago Bulls during the 1970s.

Sloan, who teaches language arts at Platteview Central Junior High School, is the daughter of Jerry Sloan, coach of the NBA's Utah Jazz and a standout player with the Chicago Bulls during the 1970s. Several years ago, she visited her sister, Kathy, then with the Racers, and loved the area so much she jumped at the chance to relocate here.

After graduating from McLeansboro High School, Sloan played college basketball for one year at Flagler College in St. Augustine, Fla. When her dad was promoted from assistant to head coach of the Jazz in 1989, Sloan transferred to the University of Utah, hung up her sneakers and concentrated on earning her degree in English.

Sloan said she and her father, an assistant for the 1996 U.S. Olympic team, do not discuss strategy when they are together, but she has asked her father for advice on approaching the game from a coaching standpoint.

"He's given me a lot of advice about the mental aspects of the game, dealing with pressure and when to do certain things, and I've tried to adapt that to my own system," she said. "He told me not to get too wound up and to make it so the kids have fun and get a chance to play.

The only female coach at Platteview High School, Sloan, who has been dubbed "rookie" by her colleagues, has quickly earned respect for her abilities.

"The girls really like her, and she

Eric Francis

Sloan isn't sure she's going to make coaching a life-long profession but for now she's enjoying the opportunities it presents.

works a lot with our guards," said Wade Lanum, Platteview girls' basketball coach. "She's getting to know the kids and developing a coach's eye, and she really tries to downplay the fact that she's Jerry Sloan's daughter. She works hard and wants to be known for herself."

Sloan also coaches freshman volleyball and junior high track in the Platteview system. She said Lanum and the other PHS coaches have given her the opportunity to grow as a coach.

"Wade has been really supportive and allowed me to struggle on my own," Sloan said. "All the coaches call me 'rookie,' but I've been in sports all my life, so I can relate to it. It's been a great experience for me." ■

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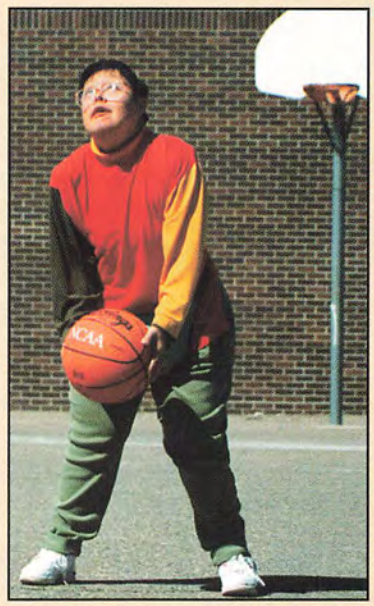

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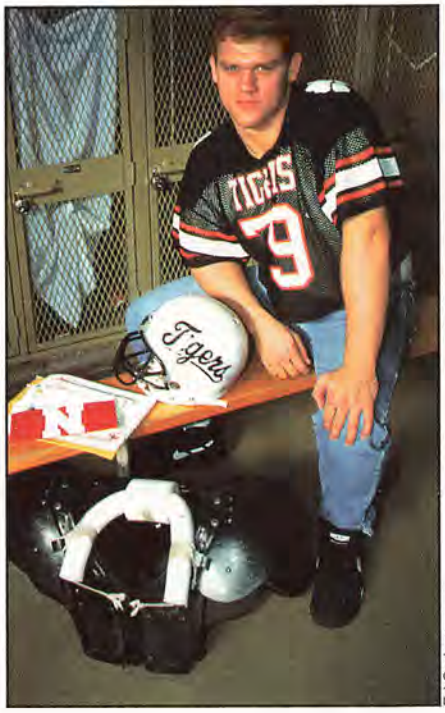
Chris Saalfeld — North Bend Central



Ed Carlson

Growing up the son of hard-working Nebraska parents and a lifelong Husker fan, North Bend Central High School senior Chris Saalfeld is a product of his environment.

"I've never seen a more mature, level-headed, hard-working kid in my years of coaching," said North Bend Central football coach Tony Allgood. "He's the kind of person and football player that no matter what you tell him, he'll do it, and he'll do it well. He never quits, and he works tremendously hard."

It's also easy to see the reflections of his childhood dreams in his future plans. Although Saalfeld was offered football scholarships by several Division II schools and attracted the interest of the Air Force Academy and Kansas State, he accepted an offer to walk-on at Nebraska.

Saalfeld's physical and mental attributes speak for themselves. The 6-foot-3, 255-pound offensive tackle was part of a line that allowed one sack in three years. He bench presses 340 pounds, has a 580-pound squat and power cleans 240 pounds.

For his play, Saalfeld was named to the Class C-1 All-State and Fremont All-Area teams — and that was at defensive tackle, where he recorded 109 of his school-record 363 tackles in 1995.

In the academic arena, he's equally powerful as an honor student with a 3.5 GPA. He scored a 24 on his ACT.

And, Allgood said, North Bend Central relied on Saalfeld in a pinch.

"We timed him at 5.35 40-yard dash electronically this fall, but we think he's closer to a 5.2 or 5.1 on a hand-held timer," Allgood said. "Whatever the clock may say, when he was on the field this past fall, there was no doubt who we were running behind. We could always count on Chris to make the plays when we needed him to. He's just that kind of player."

— Michael Watkins

Russ Hochstein — Hartington Cedar Catholic

Darin Epperly

According to the local newspaper, one of the biggest news events in 1995 in the city of Hartington was a visit by the Nebraska ETV network.

The public television station was in town to do a story on Hartington Cedar Catholic football standout Russ Hochstein, whose recruitment by the University of Nebraska stirred excitement into the Northeast Nebraska community of 1,700.

But even with all the attention Hochstein (Hoke-STINE) has gained over the past few months as the first Nebraska scholarship athlete in the history of Hartington, his high school football coach said Hochstein has remained the same modest person he's always known.

"He struggled with the extra attention," Terry Kathol said. "He's always been a very down-to-earth, level-headed kid, even when he was an eighth-grader. He understands his weaknesses and is very mature. I think that comes from him playing varsity football ever since he was a freshman."

Hochstein has played center, tackle and guard on the football field and, at 6-foot-4, 245 pounds, he has good leverage on both pass and run blocking. He also stars on the Trojans' basketball team, consistently scoring in double figures while leading the team in rebounding.

"No matter where he lines up, there's never any drop off in production," Kathol said. "He's the consummate professional on the field."

What sets Hochstein apart from other great athletes he's coached, Kathol said, is his work ethic.

"He's made continuous improvement in his technical skills, but it was because of his commitment to practice time in the weight room and learning the game better that made him such a solid player," Kathol said. ■

— Michael Watkins

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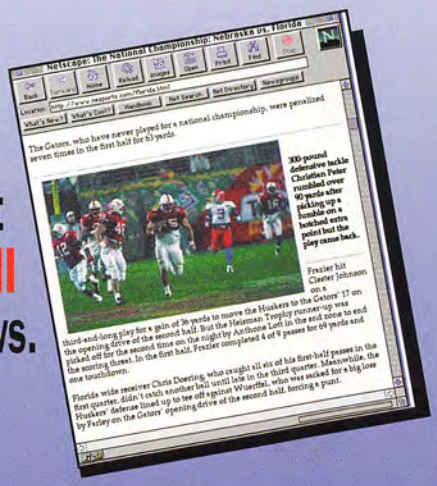

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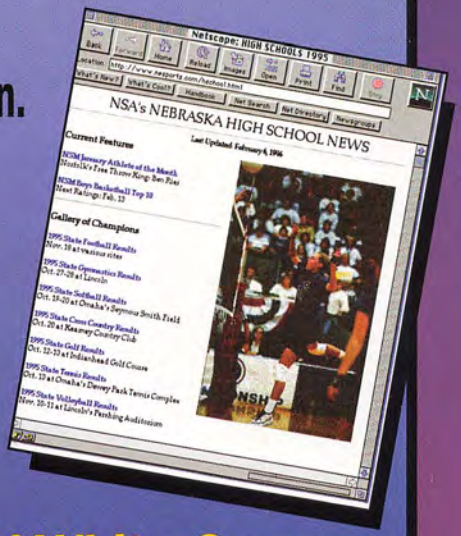

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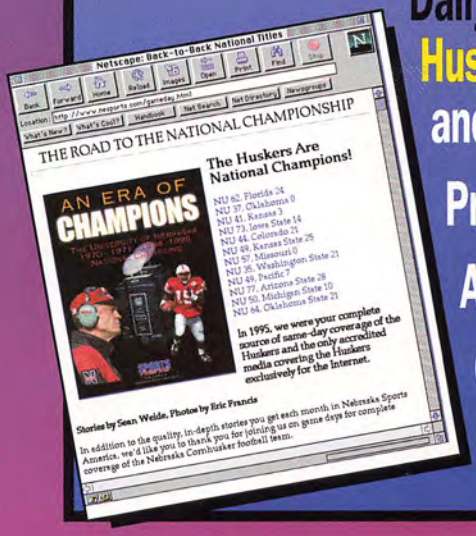
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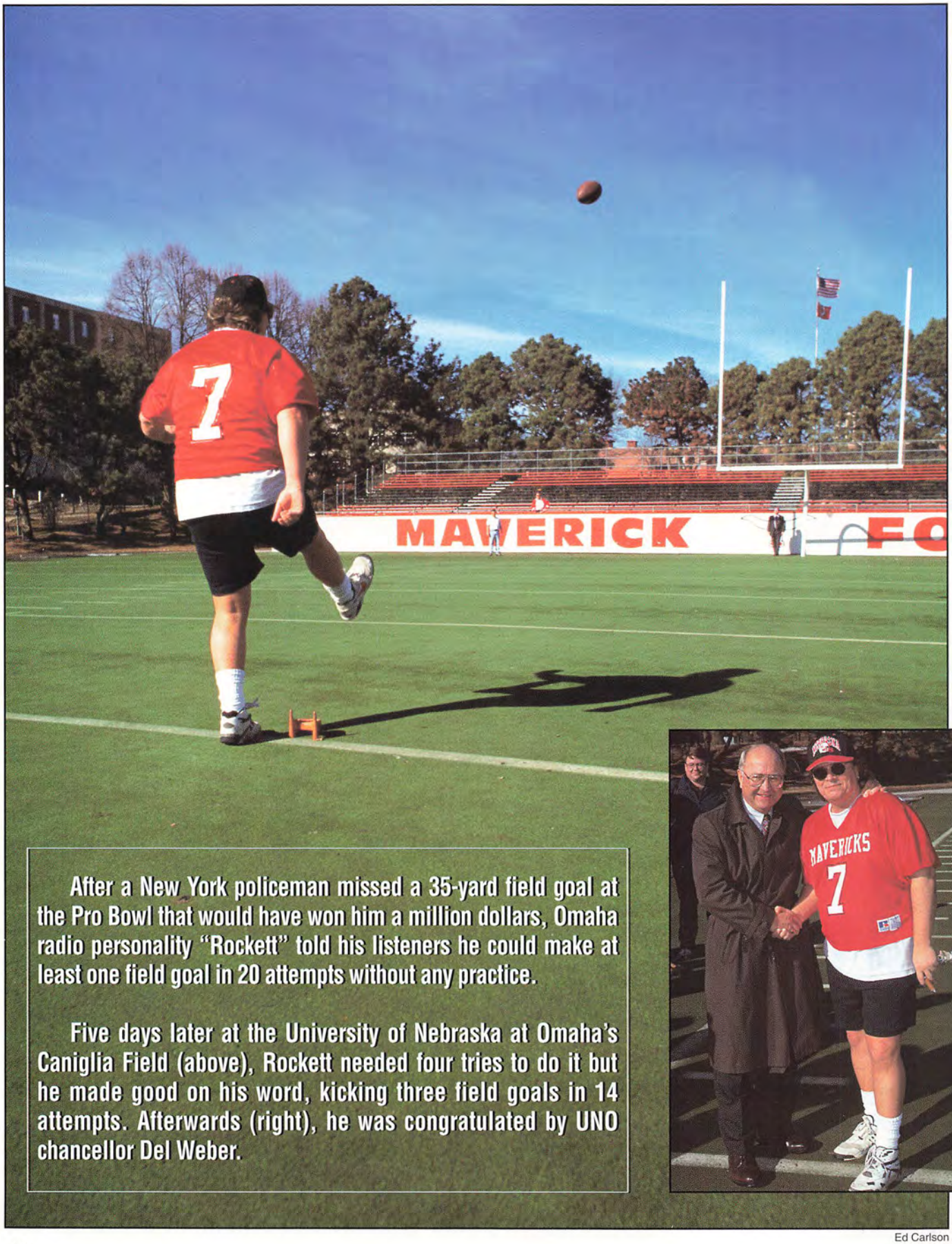

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Ed Carlson

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